A Legal-Victimological Study on the Complexity of Reporting Procedures and Perceived Futility of Law Enforcement in Theft Crime

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Abstract

Many theft victims in densely populated residential areas choose to remain silent and refrain from reporting to the police, leading to the assumption that the actual incidence of theft is significantly higher than officially recorded. This study aims to explain the reasons why victims do not report and the role of perceived complexity of reporting procedures as well as the perceived futility of law enforcement in that decision. The study utilizes a normative-empirical approach from a victimological perspective. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with ten informants, comprising seven victims, two community leaders, and one witness in Bidaracina Village, Community Unit (RW) 03, and analyzed thematically. The results reveal three primary reasons: a lack of evidence such as surveillance camera recordings, the perception that reporting procedures are lengthy and disproportionate to the loss, and the belief that reporting will yield no results. The latter belief stems not from the failure of formal restorative justice, but from informal, family-based settlements that protect perpetrators due to their proximity to influential local figures—a pattern linked to perpetrator non-deterrence. This study recommends transparency in case resolution at the neighborhood (RT) and community unit (RW) levels, as well as further research linking these findings to socio-legal frameworks.

Keywords: *Victimology, Theft, Crime Reporting, Restorative Justice, Local Backing ("Dekingan").*

A. INTRODUCTION

Theft is one of the criminal offenses that frequently occurs in society; however, not all victims report the incidents they experience to the police. In criminology, the gap between the actual number of crimes committed and the number officially recorded is known as the *dark figure of crime*. Theft involving relatively minor financial losses is among the offenses most frequently left unreported. This situation not only reduces the accuracy of crime statistics but also directly affects the effectiveness of law enforcement and the fulfillment of victims' rights. This phenomenon is often exacerbated by public doubts regarding the effectiveness of formal legal mechanisms, which encourage greater reliance on informal or amicable settlements.

Under Indonesian criminal procedural law, reports from the public serve as one of the entry points for the investigation process. When victims choose to remain silent, criminal incidents do not reach law enforcement authorities, meaning that the state loses the opportunity to initiate criminal proceedings, perpetrators are not investigated, and no data are available to map crime-prone areas. For victims,

remaining silent means losing access to the forms of redress that should be provided by law, such as case investigations and opportunities to recover stolen property. Perpetrators who are never subjected to legal proceedings also have the opportunity to repeat their offenses, either against the same victims or against others. Low crime-reporting rates have also become a concern in international studies. Riascos Villegas et al. (2023), who developed a statistical model to estimate unreported crimes in Bogotá, Colombia, cited the city's 2021 victimization survey, which showed that only 27% of victims reported their experiences to the police. They also noted that reporting decisions are influenced by several factors, including the severity of the crime, community social networks, attitudes toward the police, and previous experiences with law enforcement authorities. Consequently, the dark figure of crime may lead to misleading security planning.

The question of why crime victims choose to remain silent has increasingly been addressed in victimological studies. Victimology is a branch of criminology that examines crime victims, including their experiences, needs, and the factors that influence their decisions to report or refrain from reporting incidents to law enforcement authorities. Munir and Siregar (2024) examined secondary victimization outside the criminal justice system, referring to additional suffering experienced by victims who choose not to report crimes. Through a qualitative case study of four online news reports involving victims of domestic violence, child marriage, bullying, and a 52-year-old victim who was killed by a mob while attempting to recover a vehicle that had been fraudulently taken or stolen, they found that secondary victimization can take various forms, including prolonged trauma, confinement, mob violence, and even suicide. The underlying causes vary, ranging from psychological effects and structural biases to the absence of adequate assistance. From a victimological perspective, victims who remain silent do not cease to be victims: they continue to bear material losses, experience disruptions to their sense of security, and receive neither recognition nor redress from the legal system. The case of the 52-year-old victim who was attacked by a mob is particularly relevant to this study because it demonstrates how the absence of effective reporting channels can lead to vigilantism, which further harms victims.

More specifically, Munir and Siregar (2024), referring to the findings of Stewart et al. (2024), identified four factors that discourage victims from reporting crimes: the absence of evidence, trauma associated with the reporting process, the tendency to blame themselves, and victims' knowledge of the perpetrator's identity. These findings are consistent with the interviews conducted in Bidaracina, particularly regarding limited evidence and knowledge of perpetrators' identities. Most informants knew or suspected who the perpetrators were but nevertheless chose not to pursue formal reporting channels. In the context of banking crimes, Wati also found that victims who realized they had been victimized might be reluctant to report incidents because they considered the police inefficient or unlikely to follow up on their reports, viewed the incidents as private matters that should preferably be resolved outside the courts, or felt embarrassed and did not wish to become witnesses.

In victimological studies, victims who are reluctant to report or file complaints are referred to as silent victims.

Public perceptions of whether legal procedures are complicated have also been widely discussed. Putra, Triana, and Afrita examined law enforcement concerning minor theft offenses within the jurisdiction of the Dumai Resort Police and found that case handling remained suboptimal and inconsistent. Many cases continued to be processed under the provisions governing ordinary theft in the Indonesian Criminal Code (*Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana* or KUHP), without considering the perpetrator's economic circumstances or the value of the stolen property. They identified three major obstacles: limited human resources and facilities available to law enforcement authorities, low public legal awareness that discouraged people from reporting crimes, and legal procedures perceived as complicated and ineffective in deterring perpetrators. These findings reinforce the assumption that perceptions of procedural complexity are not merely subjective feelings experienced by victims but are also reflected in actual conditions in the field.

The perception that reporting crimes to the police is futile needs to be examined alongside the literature on restorative justice, which refers to an approach to resolving criminal cases that emphasizes restoring relationships between perpetrators, victims, and communities rather than merely imposing punishment. Faisal, Handayani, and Sakti examined its implementation in minor theft cases in Bandung City and found that this approach was more humane and effective than conventional judicial proceedings because perpetrators assumed direct responsibility, victims received compensation, and community members participated in restoring social relationships. However, one of the obstacles was the public's limited understanding of the concept. Similarly, Sitorus and Simamora found that restorative justice facilitated by the Public Prosecutor's Office was effective in reducing recidivism because it fostered perpetrators' moral awareness and strengthened their reintegration into society.

Some cases at the research site were indeed resolved through amicable or familial arrangements, which at first glance appeared consistent with the principles of restorative justice. However, the two aforementioned studies examined mechanisms that were deliberately designed and implemented, whereas the amicable settlements described by the informants were repeatedly associated with perpetrators who showed no signs of deterrence. These settlements did not arise from restorative agreements in which victims participated on an equal basis. Instead, they occurred because the perpetrators were related to or closely connected with influential figures in the neighborhood, such as the head of the neighborhood association (*Rukun Tetangga* or RT). Residents themselves referred to this pattern as “dekingan,” meaning protection or backing through influential personal connections. This term is used in this article as a working term derived from field data and does not yet have an established academic reference.

Public trust in law enforcement institutions also shapes people's attitudes toward crime reporting. Hatmawan demonstrated that public trust in the Indonesian National Police (*Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia* or Polri) directly influences

voluntary compliance among citizens. He also argued that procedural fairness alone is insufficient to restore legitimacy that has been eroded when relations between the public and the police become strained. Drawing on Murphy (2017), Hatmawan distinguishes two reasons why people trust institutions: instrumental legitimacy, which is based on tangible outcomes (trust temporarily increases when law enforcement genuinely reduces crime rates), and normative legitimacy, which is based on whether the process is perceived as fair and morally appropriate. He also employs Hirschi's (1969) social bond theory to explain why different social groups may respond differently to police authority. Several informants in this study likewise expressed low levels of trust in formal legal processes, consistent with these findings.

Existing literature has addressed only certain aspects of this issue, and the discussions remain fragmented: secondary victimization and the absence of evidence, procedural complexity in legal processes, formal restorative justice, and trust in law enforcement institutions. To the best of the author's knowledge, no previous study has integrated all these premises while simultaneously examining the gap between formal restorative justice and informal settlement patterns based on local social connections or power relations. This article addresses that gap by combining an examination of criminal procedural law provisions concerning crime reporting with a victimological perspective supported by interview findings. It is also expected to provide an academic basis for evaluating law enforcement policies and theft-reporting services at the community level.

Two examples from the field data illustrate this pattern. A community leader recounted an attempted motorcycle theft in which the perpetrator was temporarily detained at the RW office and was about to be reported to the police. However, the report was never submitted after it became known that the perpetrator had relatives who had previously held positions within the neighborhood. A witness estimated that the same perpetrator had repeatedly committed theft, approximately ten times, without ever facing legal proceedings because the perpetrator's family consistently defended or bailed them out. Similar patterns, in which perpetrators were known to residents but protected from legal proceedings because of family relationships or social influence, also emerged in several other victims' accounts.

The scope of this article is limited to theft offenses experienced by residents of a single neighborhood, namely RW 03, Bidaracina Urban Village, as well as the perceptions and experiences of victims, witnesses, and community leaders regarding crime reporting. This article does not statistically measure crime rates, comprehensively evaluate the performance of police institutions, or examine whether residents' perceptions correspond to objective law enforcement data. Instead, its focus is to understand how these perceptions are formed and how they influence victims' decisions to report incidents or remain silent.

The position of this article in relation to previous studies can be outlined as follows. Munir and Siregar examined victims who did not report crimes across different types of offenses through case studies based on news reports, whereas this article focuses specifically on theft and explores the direct experiences of victims

through interviews. Putra, Triana, and Afrita examined obstacles from the perspective of law enforcement authorities, whereas this article approaches the issue from the victims' perspective. Faisal, Handayani, and Sakti, as well as Sitorus and Simamora, evaluated restorative justice as an effective formal mechanism, whereas this article finds that the dominant practice in the field consists of informal settlements that are fundamentally different in nature. Hatmawan discussed compliance with police authority in general, whereas this article specifically connects public trust with decisions to report theft offenses.

The conceptual framework of this article is based on three premises that are assumed to be interconnected in influencing victims' decisions: the absence of evidence, perceptions of complexity in reporting procedures, and perceptions of the futility of law enforcement. The third premise consists of two sub-mechanisms: formal restorative justice, as discussed in the literature, and informal settlements based on local power relations, which are more dominant in the field data. These three premises lead to victims' decisions not to report crimes, which subsequently produce two consequences: criminal incidents remain officially unrecorded (the dark figure of crime), and perpetrators are not deterred and therefore repeat their offenses.

Theoretically, this article is expected to contribute to criminological and victimological studies, particularly concerning the underreporting of criminal offenses and secondary victimization outside the criminal justice system, while also enriching discussions on the relationship between public trust and victims' decisions to report crimes. Practically, this article is expected to serve as an evaluative reference for law enforcement authorities in improving theft-reporting procedures so that they become more accessible and trustworthy to the public, while simultaneously reducing opportunities for informal settlements based on local power relations that fail to deter perpetrators.

Three concepts are consistently employed throughout this article. The perception of complexity in reporting procedures refers to the subjective assessment made by victims or residents regarding the level of difficulty, the length of time required, and the number of stages involved in reporting theft, regardless of how the procedures are formally regulated. The perception of the futility of law enforcement refers to the subjective assessment that legal proceedings following a theft report will not produce meaningful outcomes, whether based on experiences or knowledge of formal restorative justice or informal settlement patterns based on local power relations, which are more dominant in the data examined in this study. The absence of evidence refers to the condition in which evidentiary materials are unavailable or limited at the time a theft occurs, such as CCTV recordings, eyewitnesses, or other physical evidence, which victims perceive as obstacles to the successful reporting of the incident.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this article addresses two research questions. First, what factors lead victims of theft to refrain from reporting the incidents they experience to law enforcement authorities, from a victimological perspective? Second, what role do perceptions of complexity in reporting procedures

and the perceived futility of law enforcement play in victims' decisions not to report theft? This article aims to analyze both issues. The discussion is structured by presenting the research methodology, outlining interview findings according to the three factors examined, reviewing criminal procedural law provisions concerning crime reporting and restorative justice, analyzing the findings using the reviewed literature, and concluding with conclusions and recommendations.

B. METHOD

This study utilizes a qualitative design with a mixed normative-empirical approach. The normative approach analyzes statutory provisions governing crime reporting under the Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP, Law No. 20 of 2025)—specifically Articles 1(45–46), 5, 13, and 23 regarding reports/complaints; Articles 1(21) and 79–84 regarding restorative justice; Article 144 on victim rights—and the Criminal Code (KUHP, Law No. 1 of 2023) Articles 476–478 and 481 regarding theft. The empirical approach examines lived experiences and perceptions obtained in the field.

Field research was conducted in Bidaracina Village, East Jakarta, specifically RW 03 (encompassing 12 RT units). The location was selected due to established informant network access and verified unreported theft occurrences confirmed by the RW head. Data collection took place from September 20–22, 2026.

Primary data were derived from 10 informants selected through purposive sampling: seven direct victims, two community leaders, and one witness. Data collection was concluded upon reaching data saturation—specifically when informal settlement patterns recurred across six of the ten informants. Semi-structured interviews were guided by four open-ended thematic groups: event chronology, evidence availability, non-reporting rationale, and law enforcement views. Audio was recorded across 13 files, transcribed, and anonymized (coded INF-01 through INF-10). Consent was obtained, though in one instance post-interview consent was recorded, noted here as an ethical limitation. Secondary data comprised statutory codes, academic journals, and books on victimology, secondary victimization, minor theft enforcement, and public police trust.

Data were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis. Validity was maintained through source triangulation (comparing victim, witness, and leader accounts) and theoretical triangulation (evaluating empirical findings against restorative justice and victimological frameworks). Due to sensitive disclosures regarding perpetrator identities, references to perpetrators are strictly limited to academically necessary details.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research subject encompasses the experiences and perceptions of residents in Bidaracina Village, RW 03, regarding theft incidents and their reporting decisions. Primary data were gathered from 10 informants. Stolen items across the seven victim cases included mobile phones (2 cases), motorcycles (2 cases), a pair of shoes, a bicycle along with a desk containing cash and valuables (1 case), and four pet birds (1 case).

A significant majority of informants never reported their cases to the police. Three recurring reasons emerged:

1. Lack of physical evidence, particularly CCTV coverage.
2. The perception that reporting is inconvenient and disproportionate to the loss value.
3. The belief that reporting is futile because perpetrators frequently avoid legal consequences through informal protection ("dekingan").

The third factor was the most prominent. Informants explicitly linked this protection to perpetrator non-deterrence and repeated offenses.

Table 1. Summarizes Non-Reporting Factors Per Informant

Code	Category	Lack / Absence of Evidence	Perceived Procedural Complexity	Perceived Futility (Formal RJ/*"Dekingan"*)	Key Notes
INF-01	Victim	Yes (explicit: lost phone box)	Yes (anticipates hassle)	Yes (general futility belief)	Minor trauma, hyper-vigilance
INF-02	Victim	Partial (CCTV available, unused)	No (reported; rated process 7/10)	No for self; noted *"dekingan"* in neighbor cases	**Counter-example:** Only formal path taken (insurance via finance); satisfied
INF-03	Victim	Yes (primary factor; no CCTV)	No (explicitly denied complexity)	No for self; rated response "prompt"	**Counter-example:** Full self-blame attribution
INF-04	Victim	Yes (no CCTV; identity known)	Yes (explicit: "convoluted", "stalls at report desk")	Yes (strong *"dekingan"*: RT nephew; social sanction threats)	Repeat offender (≥5 times); conducted independent search
INF-05	Victim	Yes (bike case); N/A (desk case)	Yes (reported to RT; closed without action)	Yes (explicit *"dekingan"* via family ties)	Direct experience of ignored reporting
INF-06	Victim	Yes (no CCTV)	Not explicit (main reason: avoid conflict)	Yes (*"dekingan"* in neighbor case)	Describes family protection systems
INF-07	Victim	Yes (primary factor)	Not discussed	Partial (heard of released suspect)	Counter-example: viewed RT/RW to police path as responsive
INF-08	Community Leader	— (general observation)	Yes (hierarchical RT-RW structure delays)	Yes (detailed *"dekingan"*: "jungle law")	Key quote: trust crisis in police ("all about money")
INF-09	Community Leader	Yes (motorcycle case hard to prove)	Yes ("lengthy, complex, ends in money")	Partial (family-based; conflict avoidance driven)	All RW theft cases resolved

					informally; none reached police
INF-10	Witness	Yes (no CCTV)	Not explicitly discussed	Yes (explicit *"dekingan"*: repeat offender ±10 times bailed out)	Key phrase: "playing again and again" (normalization)

Source: Author analysis (2026) based on transcripts of 10 informants. "—" indicates not applicable.

1. Lack or Insufficiency of Evidence

Eight out of ten informants cited missing evidence—primarily CCTV footage—as a major obstacle. As INF-07 noted: "I chose to stay silent/let it go... I felt reporting was useless without evidence." However, INF-04 demonstrated that missing formal evidence does not mean missing social evidence: the perpetrator's identity was well-known locally due to past offenses. Thus, lack of evidence serves as a reinforcing prerequisite rather than a sole cause.

2. Perceived Complexity of Reporting Procedures

Six informants characterized the reporting process as tedious and disproportionate. INF-04 stated: "...police procedures are viewed as long and convoluted, especially for lost shoes... it's not worth the back-and-forth." INF-05 had directly reported two thefts to the RT head, only for both cases to be closed without investigation. Conversely, INF-02 (who reported via a motor finance company for insurance purposes) found police cooperation satisfactory (7/10).

3. Perceived Futility of Law Enforcement

The perception of futility emerged consistently among the majority of informants, but its manifestations need to be distinguished into two sub-mechanisms. The first sub-mechanism concerns formal restorative justice. None of the 10 informants described a case resolution process conducted through a mechanism facilitated by an authorized institution, involving a deliberate and equitable restorative agreement between the perpetrator and the victim, as examined by Faisal, Handayani, and Sakti, as well as Sitorus and Simamora. Formal restorative justice at the research site was not merely rarely practiced; rather, it was not observed at all in the 10 documented cases.

The second sub-mechanism involves informal resolution based on local power relations ("dekingan" or influential backing). Six out of 10 informants (INF-02, INF-04, INF-05, INF-06, INF-08, and INF-10) recounted patterns of theft case resolution, either involving incidents they had personally experienced or those they knew had happened to others. These cases were characterized by three features: resolution through familial arrangements, the absence of law enforcement involvement, and decisions driven by kinship ties or the perpetrator's social influence rather than by a deliberate restorative agreement. The most detailed account was provided by INF-08, a community figure, who described two motorcycle theft cases that never proceeded to the police because the perpetrators were related to someone who had previously held a position within the local community: "...it turned out that the perpetrator was related to someone who had previously held a position here, so they had

'power'/backing... Since reporting to the police was considered more complicated, what ultimately prevailed was the 'law of the jungle': if residents encountered the perpetrator on the street, they would take the law into their own hands; the neighborhood head (RT/RW) could only issue warnings but was unable to prevent it."

A structurally similar pattern emerged in INF-04's account, in which the perpetrator was the nephew of the local RT head, who continued to protect him despite clear evidence and even threatened residents with social or administrative sanctions if they pursued formal legal channels. A similar pattern was also reported by INF-10, who estimated that the same perpetrator had committed theft approximately ten times without ever facing legal proceedings because his family consistently defended him. INF-05 and INF-06 reported similar patterns in cases they had personally experienced or directly witnessed, emphasizing their reluctance to act because of uncomfortable social dynamics involving kinship or friendship ties. INF-09 added that all theft cases brought to the RW had been settled through familial arrangements and that none had ever reached the police. However, INF-09 considered this pattern to be more a form of conflict avoidance than pure protection based on power relations. Meanwhile, INF-07 had heard about another case in which the perpetrator was released because their identity could not be established with certainty. Across all these cases, informants consistently stated that the perpetrators showed no signs of deterrence. In the cases reported by INF-04 and INF-10, the perpetrators were even suspected of having repeated their offenses more than five times. This finding differs considerably from Sitorus and Simamora's findings, which indicate that formal restorative justice implemented by the Public Prosecutor's Office is effective in reducing recidivism.

4. Additional Findings: Dark Figures and Secondary Victimization

Of the 10 documented cases, only one (INF-02) involved formal legal proceedings, while the remaining nine cases were never officially reported to law enforcement authorities. This finding supports the initial assumption that many theft incidents that actually occur are never officially recorded (the dark figure of crime). Regarding psychological impacts, INF-01, INF-02, and INF-04 reported heightened vigilance, anxiety about the security of their personal belongings, or discomfort about living in the neighborhood where the incidents occurred, although none reported severe psychological effects. INF-04 admitted that they had nearly taken the law into their own hands after facing resistance from those protecting the perpetrator. These two findings demonstrate that choosing to remain silent does not free victims from the consequences of crime: psychological burdens and the risk of escalation continue to be borne by victims and their surrounding communities. This indicates a risk of secondary victimization through escalation toward collective violence, as identified by Munir and Siregar, although in these cases, the informants themselves managed to prevent such escalation.

This section interprets the findings presented above using restorative justice, victimology, and previous studies as analytical frameworks. It also highlights the gap between the normative ideals of justice and actual practices in the field.

1. The Absence of Physical Evidence as a Prerequisite, Rather Than the Sole Cause

The finding that eight out of 10 informants identified the absence of CCTV cameras as an obstacle to reporting theft is consistent with the barriers identified by Putra, Triana, and Afrita in their study of law enforcement concerning minor theft offenses. However, the case reported by INF-04 reveals a nuance that has received relatively little attention in the reviewed literature: the absence of formal evidence does not necessarily indicate the absence of social evidence. In many cases at the research site, the perpetrators' identities were already widely known among residents through their histories and reputations. Nevertheless, this shared knowledge never translated into official reports because of other factors, namely procedural complexity and power relations. Thus, the absence of formal evidence functions as a prerequisite that reinforces the decision not to report, rather than as the sole cause. This is consistent with the finding that protection based on influential connections ("dekingan") also emerges independently, even in cases where the perpetrator has been clearly identified.

2. Procedural Complexity: Consistent with the Literature, but Not Uniform

The perception of procedural complexity reported by six out of 10 informants is consistent with Putra, Triana, and Afrita's findings that law enforcement concerning minor theft offenses is often perceived as complicated and ineffective in creating a deterrent effect. INF-05's account provides further support for this finding, as it involved an actual report that was submitted but subsequently disregarded. However, three informants (INF-02, INF-03, and INF-07) considered the formal process to be sufficiently responsive or not complicated at all. These informants tended to attribute the failure to identify the perpetrators to their own negligence, such as forgetting to lock their belongings or leaving them in vulnerable locations, rather than blaming the legal system. INF-02 was also the only informant who pursued the formal legal process to completion.

These findings also shift the interpretation of Putra, Triana, and Afrita's findings concerning the low level of public legal awareness. Informants in Bidaracina generally understood that theft constitutes a criminal offense and knew who the perpetrators were. What they considered was whether reporting the incident would produce any meaningful results. Therefore, reluctance to report in this research setting is more accurately understood as a calculation of the effectiveness of formal legal channels rather than as a lack of legal knowledge.

This pattern suggests two possible explanations: positive perceptions of law enforcement may be associated with a tendency to blame oneself, and/or they may be related to the type of reporting channel used (through formal institutions such as financing companies and insurance providers, whose procedures differ from direct reporting to the RT or the police). Neither possibility can be established based on the available data because the qualitative sample is too small. Therefore, they are presented only as directions for future research rather than as conclusions.

3. Formal Restorative Justice versus "Dekingan": A Confirmed Gap

The findings above reinforce the argument that the informal resolution pattern dominating the field data (six out of 10 informants) is structurally different from formal restorative justice, which has been positively evaluated by Faisal, Handayani, and Sakti, as well as Sitorus and Simamora. The key differences lie in the mechanisms and outcomes. According to these two studies, formal restorative justice is deliberately designed, facilitated by authorized institutions, and has been shown to reduce recidivism. In contrast, "dekingan" is associated with the absence of a deterrent effect and, in several cases, repeated offenses committed by the same perpetrators.

This distinction does not mean that the two previous studies are incorrect, since the objects they examine are conceptually different. Rather, the present study finds that such formal mechanisms were virtually unobserved at the research site, while the dominant pattern involved informal settlements that may superficially resemble restorative justice because both are described as "familial" or "amicable" resolutions. Substantively, however, they differ in terms of who benefits from the arrangement (the perpetrator and their network of social connections, rather than the victim receiving equitable restoration) and their impact on the perpetrator's subsequent behavior.

The position of the victim represents the sharpest distinction. The principles of restorative justice place victims on an equal footing in determining the terms of restoration. In contrast, in the case reported by INF-04, the victim faced threats of social or administrative sanctions when attempting to pursue formal legal channels. Meanwhile, in the cases reported by INF-05 and INF-06, the victims chose to give in because they felt uncomfortable confronting perpetrators who were relatives or neighbors. In other words, familial arrangements in this research setting often functioned not as spaces for restoration but as forms of pressure that encouraged victims to accept the situation, leaving their needs for recognition and restoration unmet.

From a normative perspective, this gap illustrates the distance between das Sollen, namely the ideal of case resolution oriented toward victim restoration and the prevention of reoffending, and das Sein, namely actual practices in which case resolution depends on the perpetrator's social standing. INF-08's reference to the "law of the jungle" indicates that this gap has the potential to generate further secondary victimization through collective violence, consistent with Munir and Siregar's concerns regarding group violence as a consequence of the absence of genuinely effective formal reporting channels.

The term "dekingan" is worth retaining as a working term because it captures three characteristics simultaneously: resolution through familial arrangements, the absence of law enforcement involvement, and decisions determined by the perpetrator's social standing rather than the victim's need for restoration. These three characteristics distinguish it from formal restorative justice as well as from ordinary acts of mutual forgiveness among community members. However, this term

originates from the informants' own language and has not yet been grounded in an established academic concept. Several socio-legal concepts, such as informal justice, legal pluralism, and patron-client relations in law enforcement, may be relevant to strengthening its conceptual framework. Nevertheless, these concepts have not yet been directly explored or examined in the literature. Therefore, they are mentioned here only as potential directions for further development, rather than as established theoretical support for the findings.

4. Crisis of Trust and the Legitimacy of Law Enforcement Authorities

INF-08's statement that residents have experienced a severe crisis of trust in the police ("it always ends up being about money") is relevant to Hatmawan's framework of trust and legitimacy. Drawing on Murphy (2017), Hatmawan distinguishes two reasons why people place their trust in institutions: instrumental legitimacy, which is based on tangible outcomes, and normative legitimacy, which is based on whether the process is perceived as fair and morally appropriate.

In terms of instrumental legitimacy, residents do not perceive law enforcement as reducing crime because the same perpetrators are reportedly able to repeatedly commit offenses. In terms of normative legitimacy, residents consider the legal process unfair because they believe it can be "bought" or influenced by power relations. If the social bond theory employed by Hatmawan is applied to this context, the close kinship and friendship ties within a single RW can be interpreted as the same social bonds that discourage residents from reporting incidents, as reflected in the feelings of reluctance expressed by INF-05 and INF-06. This interpretation represents the author's analysis and requires further examination.

Consistent with Hatmawan's argument, improving procedural fairness alone, for example by accelerating the administrative process of filing reports, is unlikely to be sufficient to restore public trust as long as the pattern of protection based on influential connections that underlies perceptions of injustice remains unaddressed.

5. Grassroots Law Enforcement Implications

If the perception of futility stems from protection based on influential connections, technical improvements to reporting procedures alone will not be sufficient. Amicable or familial settlements are not inherently problematic, since residents consider them a practical solution, and restorative justice also recognizes the value of resolving disputes outside formal judicial proceedings. The problem arises when such settlements lack accountability: there are no written records identifying the perpetrator, documenting the agreement, or specifying the consequences if the offense is repeated. As a result, the same perpetrators can continue to receive protection.

A legal argument that can be advanced is that informal settlements at the RT and RW levels should be subject to minimum accountability safeguards, including written documentation and referral mechanisms to the police if perpetrators repeat their offenses. Meanwhile, the police should ensure that reports of minor theft are followed up and that victims are informed of their progress so that formal legal channels can regain public trust. These two measures address both sides of the

problems identified in the findings: the protection of perpetrators at the neighborhood level and the weak responsiveness of formal legal channels.

6. The Dark Figure of Crime and the Limitations of Generalization

The finding that nine out of 10 documented cases were never officially reported illustrates, on a small scale within a single RW, the problem of the dark figure of crime that underlies this research. However, the generalizability of these findings must be limited. The 10 informants came from a single RW with interconnected social networks and were selected through the author's personal access. Therefore, although the pattern of protection based on influential connections was independently confirmed by several informants, it cannot necessarily be considered representative of other areas, let alone the national context.

Thematic coding was conducted manually without qualitative data analysis software. Furthermore, direct quotations were taken from transcripts that had been edited for clarity rather than verbatim transcripts that had been reverified against the original recordings. Consequently, the interpretations presented in this section represent the author's analysis and have not yet been subjected to peer review or member checking with the informants. These findings should therefore be understood within similar contexts, particularly densely populated residential areas characterized by strong RT and RW community structures.

D. CONCLUSION

This study aims to understand why victims of theft in RW 03, Bidaracina Subdistrict, choose not to report incidents to the police, as well as to examine the extent to which perceptions of reporting procedural complexity and the perceived futility of law enforcement influence such decisions. Based on interviews with ten informants, comprising victims, witnesses, and RW administrators, three frequently recurring and interrelated reasons emerged: residents felt that they lacked sufficient evidence, particularly CCTV footage, to support their reports; they considered the reporting process lengthy and disproportionate to the value of the stolen items; and, most notably, they believed that reporting an incident would most likely produce no meaningful outcome. These three reasons relate to an issue discussed in criminology, namely that crime statistics are compiled from recorded criminal offenses, meaning that crimes not reported to the police are excluded from official statistics, as explained by Purba, Basri, and Siregar. In this study, only one of the ten cases entered the formal legal process, leaving the other nine cases as part of the dark figure of crime.

The third reason, however, differed from the initial assumption. This sense of futility did not arise because residents had previously pursued formal restorative justice and become disappointed with the outcome, as this mechanism was almost entirely absent from the field findings. Instead, what informants repeatedly described were informal, family-based settlements that occurred because the perpetrators were related to or had close connections with influential figures in the neighborhood, particularly RT administrators. Residents referred to this practice as *dekingan*, a form of protection or backing through influential personal connections. According to

Hafrida and Usman, restorative justice is an approach to resolving criminal cases that involves perpetrators, victims, and the community, with the aim of repairing the harm suffered by victims, while the participation of all parties constitutes an essential element of the process. Such restoration is expected to take place voluntarily and with the parties' awareness, rather than under coercion. Furthermore, reconciliation serving as the basis for the termination of prosecution must be conducted voluntarily through deliberation and consensus, without pressure, coercion, or intimidation. Prayoga and Rinaldi emphasize a similar point: without the victim's initiative to forgive, a case cannot be resolved through restorative justice, particularly when such a resolution is imposed by local community figures. These requirements were not fulfilled in the *dekingan* pattern, as one informant reported facing threats of social or administrative sanctions when attempting to pursue formal legal proceedings. Unlike restorative justice, which is designed to encourage perpetrators to recognize their wrongdoing and restore victims' rights, this pattern was repeatedly associated with perpetrators who showed no deterrence and continued to reoffend. Such repeated offenses are difficult to identify in official records because protected perpetrators are never formally processed. Meanwhile, recidivism research itself is generally limited to repeated offenses known to criminal justice institutions, particularly the police and correctional institutions, as discussed by Purba, Basri, and Siregar. Hafrida and Usman also observe that criminal justice proceedings have not been perceived as fair by victims because they do not experience direct state protection against the harm they have suffered. Consequently, the sense of futility among Bidaracina residents is consistent with broader criticisms concerning the position of victims within the criminal justice system. These findings address the second research question: perceptions of procedural complexity and the perceived futility of law enforcement do influence victims' decisions not to report incidents. However, the nature of this perceived futility is more complex than initially anticipated, namely, the experience or awareness that individuals with sufficiently close connections to influential figures tend to escape legal proceedings. As a result, almost all documented cases were never officially reported.

Residents' perceptions were not uniform. Some informants considered the legal process in their neighborhood to be relatively effective, and one informant successfully resolved a case through formal channels with an outcome they considered satisfactory. Distrust in law enforcement in this area therefore appears to be associated with personal experiences and the reporting channels pursued. Prayoga and Rinaldi argue that restorative justice is suitable for rural communities because it emphasizes the restoration of relationships among residents and can be adapted to local values. Accordingly, family-based settlements at the RT and RW levels are not inherently problematic, provided that they remain oriented toward restoring victims' rights rather than protecting perpetrators. They also note that limited public understanding of restorative justice constitutes an obstacle to its implementation, and that restorative justice-based settlements must avoid *street justice*, or forms of mob justice carried out by the community. This warning closely reflects the depiction of a

"law of the jungle" conveyed by a community leader at the research site when formal legal channels were considered unreliable. From the perspective of social bonds, Purba, Basri, and Siregar explain Hirschi's theory that the stronger an individual's social bonds (attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief), the lower the likelihood of deviant behavior. Applied to this context, close social ties among residents within the same RW may also contribute to their reluctance to report incidents, although this interpretation requires further investigation. This study also has several limitations: the informants came from a single, closely connected RW and were selected through the researcher's personal access, meaning that the findings may not necessarily apply to other locations. Furthermore, the term *dekingan* originated from the field findings and has not yet been linked to an established academic concept.

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