JURNAL LOCUS: Penelitian & Pengabdian
Volume 5 No. 10 October 2026, pp 9440-9451
E-ISSN 2829-7334
DOI: 10.58344/locus.v5i10.6269

Oversight, Accountability, and Reform: A Historical Study of The Formation of The Police Professional Standards Division (Propam)

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Keywords:
Propam Polri; Police Reform; Accountability; Institutional Legitimacy; Internal Supervision.

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Abstract

The establishment of the Professional and Security Division (*Divisi Profesi dan Pengamanan, Propam*) of the Indonesian National Police (*Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia, Polri*) represented a significant aspect of the institutional transformation of the police following Indonesia's post-1998 reform era. Propam has traditionally been regarded as an internal oversight body responsible for enforcing discipline and professional codes of ethics among Polri personnel. However, this perspective tends to emphasize its administrative functions while overlooking the political and institutional circumstances underlying its establishment. This study aimed to critically examine the historical process of Propam's formation within the broader framework of police reform in Indonesia. The research employed a qualitative methodology with a historical-juridical approach, drawing on a review of legislation, regulatory documents, scholarly literature, and security sector reform reports. The findings suggested that Propam's establishment was driven not only by the need to strengthen internal oversight but also by Polri's institutional efforts to establish legitimacy as a professional civilian law enforcement organization following its separation from the military structure. Furthermore, Propam's institutional position presented a structural dilemma, as its oversight responsibilities were exercised within the same organization whose personnel and activities it was tasked with supervising. This arrangement created potential tensions between institutional loyalty and the demands of public accountability. Consequently, the study concluded that Propam's effectiveness depended not only on its formal authority but also on the independence, transparency, and public credibility of its internal oversight mechanisms

INTRODUCTION

The political reforms initiated in Indonesia in 1998 brought fundamental changes to various state institutions, including the Indonesian National Police (*Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia, Polri*) (Bayley, 1994). One of the central objectives of security sector reform was the separation of Polri from the Indonesian Armed Forces (*Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia, ABRI*), which established the police as a civilian institution primarily responsible for maintaining public security and order, enforcing the law, and providing protection and services to the public (Sutrisno, 2016; (Huntington, 1957).

This institutional transformation required changes not only in organizational structures but also in governance practices, organizational culture, and internal oversight mechanisms (Cross & Fine, 2024). Within a modern democratic system, police institutions are expected to exercise their authority professionally, transparently, and accountably (Boehme & Schnell, 2022). Consequently, effective internal oversight constitutes an essential mechanism for preventing abuses of authority, disciplinary violations, and breaches of professional ethics (Bolger & Walters, 2019).

(Taylor et al., 2024) Within this context, the Professional and Security Division (*Divisi Profesi dan Pengamanan, Propam*) of the Indonesian National Police emerged as an internal oversight body responsible for monitoring police personnel's conduct, enforcing disciplinary regulations, and ensuring compliance with the police professional code of ethics. Institutionally, Propam functions as an internal accountability mechanism intended to safeguard organizational integrity and professional standards (Sutrisno, 2016) (Kim, 2025); (Sarpong, 2024). However, its establishment cannot be understood solely as an administrative response to organizational requirements, as it was also shaped by broader political and institutional developments associated with police reform.

This article argues that Propam's establishment formed part of Polri's institutional reform strategy to strengthen its legitimacy following its separation from the military structure. The creation of Propam reflected the police institution's commitment to professionalism, transparency, and public accountability. Nevertheless, as an internal oversight mechanism, Propam faces a fundamental structural challenge because it operates within the same organizational hierarchy as the personnel and institutional practices it is responsible for overseeing. This arrangement creates potential tensions between institutional loyalty and the demands for independent oversight and public accountability.

Against this background, this study addresses two central research questions: How did the Propam Division emerge within the historical context of Indonesian police reform, and to what extent can Propam fulfill public accountability requirements despite the structural limitations inherent in internal oversight? Employing a critical historical approach, the study examines Propam's institutional development, responsibilities, and governance challenges within the broader framework of police reform and the exercise of state authority (Guo & Wu, 2026). The novelty of this research lies in its critical historical examination of Propam's establishment, extending beyond descriptive institutional accounts to investigate the structural tensions between internal supervision, organizational loyalty, and democratic accountability (Dario et al., 2024). The study contributes to the literature on security sector reform by providing a critical framework for understanding the institutional limitations of internal police oversight and offering insights relevant to policy discussions on strengthening police accountability and governance in Indonesia (Bolaji & Metcalfe, 2026).

METHOD

Types and Approaches to Research

This study employed a qualitative research method with a historical-juridical approach to examine the establishment of the Professional and Security Division (*Divisi Profesi dan Pengamanan, Propam*) of the Indonesian National Police within its social, legal, and institutional contexts. The approach combined an examination of relevant laws and

regulations with an investigation of Propam's historical development as part of Indonesia's police reform process.

Types and Sources of Data

This research uses secondary data obtained from various sources, consisting of primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials. Primary legal materials include Law Number 2 of 2002 concerning the Republic of Indonesia National Police, Police Regulations regarding the professional code of ethics and discipline of members of the Indonesian National Police, and government policy regarding security sector reform and the separation of the Police from the TNI. Secondary legal materials include textbooks and scientific literature, academic journals, and previous research results relevant to the topic of internal supervision and police reform. Tertiary legal materials include legal dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other supporting reference sources.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection technique was carried out through library research, namely by reviewing and analyzing various literature, official documents, and laws and regulations related to the formation and development of the Indonesian National Police Propam Division. Literature study was chosen because this research focuses on conceptual and historical analysis, so it does not require direct field data collection.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis in this study used a descriptive-qualitative analysis method. The collected data was analyzed through three stages: data reduction, namely the process of sorting and simplifying data that is relevant to the research focus; data presentation, namely the systematic arrangement of data in the form of narrative descriptions; and drawing conclusions, namely the process of interpreting data to gain an understanding of the background to the formation and development of the functions of the Indonesian National Police Propam Division. The analysis was conducted by linking the historical aspects of the formation of Propam with the concepts of internal supervision, accountability, and police reform.

Data Validity

To ensure the validity of the data, this study uses source triangulation techniques, namely comparing various different literature sources and documents to obtain valid and academically accountable data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical Dynamics of the Formation of the Indonesian National Police's Propam Division

The research findings indicate that the formation of the Indonesian National Police's Professional and Security Division (Propam) was part of the institutional transformation process that took place after the 1998 political reforms. Prior to the reforms, internal oversight functions within the Indonesian National Police had not been integrated into a comprehensive organizational structure; supervision of members was primarily conducted through command mechanisms and disciplinary development oriented toward adherence to the organizational hierarchy. The separation of the Indonesian National Police (Polri) from the Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI) through Presidential Instruction No. 2 of 1999, and the

strengthening of the Polri's position through MPR Decrees No. VI/MPR/2000 and No. VII/MPR/2000, brought fundamental changes to the governance of the police organization, in which the need for a more professional and accountable internal oversight system became increasingly apparent. Research findings further indicate that the formation of Propam was carried out through the integration of various functions previously scattered across several work units, such as disciplinary functions, internal security, and professional development, aiming to create a more effective, coordinated oversight mechanism that aligns with the demands of institutional reform.

Changes in the Post-Reformation Internal Supervision Paradigm

Research has found a significant paradigm shift in internal oversight after the reforms. In the pre-reform period, oversight focused more on maintaining organizational discipline and loyalty to the institution; after the reforms, oversight began to focus on strengthening accountability, professionalism, and protecting public rights. This change is reflected in the expansion of Propam's functions, which not only address internal disciplinary violations but also violations of the professional code of ethics, abuse of authority, internal organizational security, and handling public complaints—transforming the internal oversight function from an administrative control mechanism into an instrument of institutional accountability. The research also shows that strengthening the internal oversight function goes hand in hand with increasing public demands for transparency and accountability within the police institution, positioning Propam as a crucial instrument in building public trust in the National Police.

Propam as an Instrument of Reform and Accountability

Based on the analysis of documents and literature used in this study, it was found that the establishment of Propam has a strategic function in supporting the police reform agenda. Propam serves not only as a tool for enforcing discipline and a code of ethics, but also as a symbol of the National Police's commitment to the principles of good governance, transparency, and public accountability. Research results show that various post-reform regulations provide stronger legitimacy to the internal oversight function, evident in the existence of ethical review mechanisms, professional code of ethics hearings, a public complaints system, and oversight of abuse of authority by police officers. The existence of Propam in the organizational structure of the Indonesian National Police also shows an institutional effort to create an internal control mechanism that is capable of maintaining the professionalism of its members while simultaneously improving the organization's image in the eyes of the public.

Structural Dilemmas in Internal Supervision

One of the key findings of this study is the structural dilemma inherent in Propam's institutional design. As an internal oversight agency, Propam is situated within the same organizational structure as the members it supervises. Research results indicate that this situation creates a potential conflict of interest between the oversight function and the need to maintain organizational stability; in the literature on organizational governance and internal oversight, this situation is often viewed as a challenge to the independence and objectivity of oversight. Research has found that the effectiveness of internal oversight is not only determined by the existence of regulations and formal authority, but also by organizational culture factors, leadership commitment, professionalism of supervisory personnel, and the level of openness of the institution to public oversight (Marier, 2024; Ahmed et al., 2026).

Empirical Findings Regarding the Supervision of the Ethics of Police Members

The research results show that a number of cases of ethical violations by members of the Indonesian National Police that have attracted public attention demonstrate the dynamics of the implementation of internal oversight functions by Propam (Harris & Jones, 2020). The murder of Brigadier Nofriansyah Yosua Hutabarat (Brigadier J) in 2022 is a significant illustration; this case demonstrates that serious violations can involve high-ranking police officers, including those directly involved in internal oversight functions, and the handling of this case resulted in ethical sanctions in the form of dishonorable discharges (PTDH) against several police officers found guilty of violating the professional code of ethics (Foucault, 1977). Furthermore, the research also uncovered numerous other cases involving abuse of authority, extortion, member involvement in drug crimes, excessive use of violence, and disciplinary violations that received widespread public and media attention, in which Propam acted as the institution conducting inspections, internal investigations, and enforcing the professional code of ethics. However, research findings indicate that public response to the handling of these cases is often determined not only by the type of sanctions imposed, but also by the transparency of the investigation process and the consistency of enforcement—suggesting that public trust in internal oversight is strongly influenced by perceptions of the institution's independence and openness (Mardiasmo, 2009).

Challenges in Strengthening Internal Supervision of the Indonesian National Police

The research found that there are several main challenges in strengthening Propam's function as an internal accountability instrument, namely: limited structural independence, because the supervisor and the object of supervision are in the same organization; a strong corps culture, which under certain conditions can influence the objectivity of the oversight process; the demand for public transparency, which is increasing, especially in cases that attract national attention; the need for synergy with external oversight mechanisms, such as public oversight, media, Kompolnas, Ombudsman, and other law enforcement agencies; and the need to improve the professionalism of supervisory officers, including investigative capacity, ethics enforcement, and whistleblower protection. Overall, the research findings indicate that the establishment of Propam is a crucial component of the National Police's institutional reform, aimed at strengthening professionalism and organizational accountability. However, the effective implementation of this function still faces various structural and cultural challenges that require ongoing improvement within the framework of democratic police reform.

Propam as a Product of Reform and the Crisis of Police Legitimacy

The establishment of the Indonesian National Police's Professional and Security Division (Propam) cannot be understood solely as a result of administrative reorganization within the police force. Its existence must be placed within a broader context, namely post-1998 security sector reform and the National Police's efforts to rebuild institutional legitimacy after its separation from the Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI). From this perspective, Propam is not simply an internal oversight unit, but rather a product of political reform born of the urgent need to address the crisis of trust in the police institution.

Before the reform era, the Indonesian National Police (Polri) was part of the Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI), operating within a state security paradigm. In this paradigm, police legitimacy rested more on state authority and command structures than on

public trust. After the reforms, this paradigm underwent a fundamental shift. The Indonesian National Police (Polri) was required to become a civilian institution operating based on the principles of democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

These changes have significant consequences for the institution's sources of legitimacy. While previously legitimacy was derived from the National Police's position as part of the state, post-reform legitimacy must be built through professionalism, accountability, and public trust. It is in this context that the establishment of Propam becomes significant.

Theoretically, legitimacy refers to public acceptance of an institution's authority. From a political sociology perspective, institutions facing a legitimacy crisis will seek to develop new mechanisms to demonstrate their commitment to the values expected by society. The establishment of Propam can be seen as part of this strategy. By strengthening internal oversight mechanisms, the Indonesian National Police (Polri) seeks to demonstrate the institution's capacity to control itself and prosecute members who commit violations.

However, it's important to note that the establishment of Propam was not solely driven by reformist ideals. The institution's formation was also a response to growing public criticism of various cases of abuse of authority, disciplinary violations, corruption, violence by officers, and practices of impunity within the police force. In other words, Propam was born amidst a legitimacy crisis that demanded the National Police establish a more credible oversight mechanism.

From this perspective, the thesis that can be put forward is that Propam is a product of reform that serves as an instrument for reconstructing the legitimacy of the Indonesian National Police (Polri). Its presence reflects an institutional effort to transform the police force from a militaristic organization to an accountable civilian institution. However, the effectiveness of this function depends heavily on Propam's ability to exercise independent and transparent oversight.

Propam as an Instrument of Institutional Legitimacy

In studies of public organization and administration, the establishment of an oversight body is often aimed not only at improving the effectiveness of internal control but also as a means of gaining legitimacy from the external environment. This perspective is crucial for understanding Propam's position in the National Police reform.

As an institution with a monopoly on the use of state force in law enforcement, the Indonesian National Police (Polri) faces extremely high accountability demands. Any deviations committed by officers not only impact the individual perpetrators but also the image and credibility of the organization as a whole. Therefore, the existence of Propam (Propam) serves an important symbolic function, demonstrating that the Indonesian National Police (Polri) has an internal mechanism to correct and oversee the behavior of its members.

In the context of reform, Propam serves as one facet of Polri's institutional accountability. The existence of code of ethics hearings, disciplinary hearings, and the handling of public complaints serve as a means to demonstrate that the institution will not tolerate violations by its members.

However, this legitimacy function poses issues that require criticism. Internal oversight mechanisms often serve more as a tool to maintain the organization's image than as an instrument for substantively uncovering and resolving problems. In such circumstances,

oversight has the potential to degenerate into symbolic accountability, accountability that emphasizes formal appearances over real change.

Thus, the crucial question to ask is not only whether Propam is capable of addressing violations, but also whether such actions actually result in changes in organizational behavior and increased public trust. If oversight serves only as an instrument of symbolic legitimacy, its existence risks becoming a tool for the reproduction of institutional power rather than a genuine mechanism of accountability.

Therefore, analysis of Propam must go beyond a normative approach that views the institution as a solution to reform. Instead, it requires a critical evaluation of the extent to which Propam truly contributes to the transformation of organizational culture and increased public trust.

Internal Oversight Dilemma: Corps Loyalty versus Public Accountability

One of the most fundamental issues in the police's internal oversight system is the dilemma between corps loyalty and public accountability. This dilemma is central to the analysis of Propam because the institution is in a unique and problematic position: overseeing an organization that is also part of its own identity and interests.

Sociologically, any organization with a semi-military character, such as the police, tends to foster a strong corps culture. This culture is characterized by internal solidarity, loyalty to colleagues, and a commitment to organizational stability. These values are essential for maintaining institutional cohesion, but at the same time, they can hinder the implementation of objective oversight.

In the context of Propam, a dilemma arises when the need to maintain organizational solidarity clashes with the demand to transparently disclose and prosecute member violations. As part of the institution it oversees, Propam faces pressure to maintain its image while meeting public expectations of accountability.

This situation creates what is known in governance literature as a structural conflict of interest. The supervisor and the object of supervision are within the same organizational chain, making it difficult to fully achieve oversight independence. Consequently, the perception arises that internal oversight has the potential to protect the institution more than the public interest.

This issue becomes even more complex when the cases involved involve high-ranking officials or have significant political implications. In such situations, Propam often finds itself caught between two conflicting pressures: internal pressure to maintain organizational stability and external pressure to demonstrate a commitment to accountability.

Therefore, Propam's effectiveness cannot be measured solely by the number of cases handled or sanctions imposed. More importantly, the institution's ability to address the structural dilemmas inherent in its role as an internal supervisory agency. Without the ability to maintain independence and objectivity, the oversight function risks losing credibility in the eyes of the public.

Propam and Governance of Power in Modern Police

From a governance perspective, the existence of Propam can be understood as part of the checks and balances mechanism within the police organization. The police are an institution with extensive authority, including the authority to make arrests, detain, use force,

and take various actions that can restrict citizens' rights. Therefore, oversight of the use of this authority is an unavoidable necessity.

Within the framework of a democratic state governed by the rule of law, power must always be accompanied by accountability mechanisms. Propam exists as an instrument to ensure that the use of power by Polri members remains within the bounds of law and professional ethics.

However, from a critical perspective, Propam's existence can also be understood as part of the technology of organizational control. Referring to modern supervisory thinking, oversight mechanisms not only function to control member behavior but also to foster a culture of compliance and discipline within the institution. In other words, Propam not only supervises but also reproduces organizational norms deemed ideal by the National Police leadership.

This perspective demonstrates that internal oversight is not a neutral process. Oversight is always intertwined with power relations, including who has the authority to set standards of behavior, who is monitored, and how violations are defined.

In this context, Propam serves a dual function. On the one hand, it serves as an instrument to limit abuse of authority by its members. On the other hand, it is also part of the power structure tasked with maintaining the stability and sustainability of the organization. This dual function demonstrates that Propam cannot be understood solely as a supervisory institution, but also as a crucial actor in the governance of modern police power.

Critical Analysis of the Effectiveness of Propam

Analysis of Propam's effectiveness must move beyond a formalistic approach that solely assesses success based on the existence of organizational structures and regulations. The key question that needs to be asked is whether Propam is truly capable of carrying out its oversight function independently, effectively, and with public trust.

Normatively, Propam has a broad mandate to enforce discipline, maintain professional codes of ethics, maintain internal security, and handle public complaints. However, this authority does not automatically translate into effective oversight. Effectiveness is heavily influenced by organizational culture, the quality of human resources, institutional independence, procedural transparency, and political support from the organization's leadership.

One important indicator of effective oversight is the level of public trust in the process of handling member violations. If the public still perceives internal oversight as protective of members or lacking transparency, Propam's legitimacy will remain questionable, even if it formally holds strong authority.

Furthermore, Propam's fundamental problem lies in its internal institutional design. As long as the oversight mechanism remains within the same organizational structure as the object being monitored, the potential for conflicts of interest will always exist. Therefore, strengthening accountability cannot be achieved solely by increasing Propam's authority, but also by strengthening independent external oversight mechanisms.

Thus, the main thesis that can be emphasized is that Propam is an institution born out of the need for reform and building legitimacy for the Indonesian National Police (Polri). However, its effectiveness continues to be limited by the structural contradictions inherent in the internal oversight model. On the one hand, Propam serves as a crucial instrument for

building police professionalism and accountability. On the other hand, its position within the same structure as the object of oversight creates a persistent dilemma between corps loyalty and demands for public accountability.

Internal Supervision Dilemmas in Practice: An Empirical Case Analysis

To more concretely understand the challenges of internal oversight within the Indonesian National Police (Polri), it is important to analyze several cases that have garnered public attention. These cases demonstrate that the effectiveness of Propam (Propam) is determined not only by its formal authority but also by the institution's ability to independently carry out its oversight function amidst a strong corps culture and complex power relations within the police organization.

One of the most prominent cases is the murder of Brigadier Nofriansyah Yosua Hutabarat (Brigadier J) in 2022, involving Inspector General Ferdy Sambo, who at the time served as Head of the National Police's Propam Division. This case is of immense significance because it demonstrates the paradox of internal oversight at its most extreme. The official leading the oversight institution is the one suspected of serious legal and ethical violations.

From an institutional perspective, this case demonstrates systemic vulnerabilities in the internal oversight model. When actors with oversight authority occupy positions of high power within an organization, internal control mechanisms can potentially be hampered by hierarchical relationships, personal loyalties, and institutional interests. The process of uncovering the Brigadier J case, which was initially marred by changing narratives and allegations of attempts to obstruct the investigation, demonstrates that internal oversight cannot always operate effectively without strong external pressure and oversight.

From a public accountability perspective, this case serves as a crucial point, demonstrating that the success of enforcing ethics and discipline depends not solely on the existence of internal oversight bodies, but also on the involvement of various external actors, including the mass media, civil society, external oversight bodies, and widespread public attention. In other words, accountability within the police institution cannot be entirely left to the organization's internal mechanisms.

Another illustrative case involves various ethical violations involving police officers in abuse of authority, extortion practices, excessive force in law enforcement, and the involvement of certain officers in narcotics crimes. In these cases, Propam is often the institution responsible for conducting disciplinary hearings and professional code of ethics hearings. However, public response to the handling of these cases demonstrates that the success of oversight lies not only in the number of officers sanctioned, but also in the transparency of the process, the consistency of rule enforcement, and the public's perception of fairness.

This phenomenon demonstrates the tension between the institution's protective function and its public accountability function. In many organizations with a quasi-military character, the tendency to maintain internal solidarity often clashes with demands for public transparency. This situation creates what can be called the paradox of internal oversight, a situation where the oversight body is required to correct the organization while simultaneously serving as a source of its own legitimacy and institutional identity.

From the perspective of police reform, these cases demonstrate that the primary problem lies not in the absence of oversight mechanisms, but rather in their capacity to operate independently and gain public trust. Therefore, the Indonesian National Police's empirical experience demonstrates that the effectiveness of Propam (Propam) must be understood as a result of the interaction between internal and external oversight. The stronger the transparency, public participation, and external control mechanisms, the greater the opportunity for Propam to carry out its oversight function objectively and credibly.

Thus, empirical cases involving ethical violations by Polri members reinforce the argument that Propam is an institution in a dilemma. On the one hand, Propam serves as a crucial instrument for maintaining professionalism and organizational integrity. On the other hand, its position as part of a supervised structure creates inherent limitations that continue to challenge democratic police accountability.

CONCLUSION

The establishment of the Professional and Security Division (*Divisi Profesi dan Pengamanan, Propam*) of the Indonesian National Police (*Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia, Polri*) was an integral part of the institutional reform process following Polri's separation from the Indonesian Armed Forces (*Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia, ABRI*). Historically, Propam's establishment was driven not only by the administrative need to strengthen internal oversight but also by demands for democratization, professionalism, and public accountability that emerged during Indonesia's reform era. Within this context, Propam was established as an institutional mechanism to support Polri's transformation from a militarized policing structure into a civilian law enforcement institution guided by the rule of law and public service principles.

The findings revealed that Propam performed two interrelated functions. First, it operated as an internal oversight mechanism responsible for enforcing discipline, ensuring compliance with the professional code of ethics, and maintaining integrity among Polri personnel. Second, it functioned as an instrument of institutional legitimacy, reflecting Polri's commitment to reform, transparency, and accountability. Accordingly, Propam's establishment represented part of Polri's institutional strategy to restore public trust following criticism concerning abuses of authority and inadequate accountability among police personnel.

However, the study also identified a structural dilemma inherent in Propam's institutional design. As an internal oversight body operating within the same organizational hierarchy as the personnel it supervised, Propam faced potential tensions between institutional loyalty and public accountability. This arrangement could compromise the independence, objectivity, and effectiveness of its oversight functions, particularly when investigating misconduct involving senior officers or matters affecting institutional interests.

Consequently, Propam's effectiveness depended not only on its formal authority but also on institutional independence, transparency in oversight procedures, personnel professionalism, and the availability of effective external oversight mechanisms. Future efforts to strengthen police accountability should therefore extend beyond structural and regulatory reforms to include the development of an organizational culture grounded in integrity, transparency, and public accountability. Such improvements are essential for

reinforcing democratic policing principles and strengthening public confidence in the Indonesian National Police.

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