

# From Criticism to Collaboration: Assessing the Police Reform from the Public's Perspective and Its Management Implications

*From Criticism to  
Collaboration: The  
Police Reform*

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Vita Mayatinasari<sup>1\*</sup>, Novi Indah Earlyanti<sup>2</sup>, Rahmadsyah Lubis<sup>3</sup>,  
Syafuruddin<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>*Department of Police Science, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Kepolisian; Jakarta, Indonesia*

\*Corresponding Author E-Mail: vitamayastinasaris@stik-ptik.ac.id

## ABSTRACT

*Reform of the Indonesian National Police since its separation from the Indonesian National Armed Forces in 1999 has become a strategic agenda in the consolidation of democracy. Transformation efforts through various programs, from Bureaucratic Reform to the Precision Police vision, aim to build a professional, transparent, and accountable institution. However, public perception of Polri performance remains fluctuating, evident in the paradox between the public's need for security and increasing criticism related to corruption, discrimination, and human rights violations. This study aims to analyze Polri reform from the public's perspective, assess the transition from criticism to collaboration, and identify forms of criticism and patterns of collaboration. The method used is a qualitative constructivist paradigm with a literature study approach and secondary data analysis from CSO reports, public opinion surveys, and the media. The findings indicate that digital service innovation is appreciated by the public, but integrity and accountability remain weaknesses, resulting in criticism continuing to emerge as indicators of legitimacy erosion. In conclusion, internalizing procedural justice, building social legitimacy, and consistent dialogic communication are key to transforming criticism into a strategic partnership between Polri and the public.*

**Keywords:** *Institutional Legitimacy, Perception Transformation, Polri Reform, Procedural Justice, Public Trust.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian National Police (Polri), as the main law enforcement institution and guardian of public security and order (Kamtibmas), plays a strategic and central role in a democratic state (Dwyer, 2017; Pabesak et al., 2023). Since the Reform Era in 1998, Polri has been separated from the Indonesian National Armed Forces (ABRI) under the People's Consultative Assembly Decree Number VI/MPR/2000 and Law Number 2 of 2002, marking the start of internal reforms aimed at transforming the institution from a repressive tool into a professional, transparent, accountable, and public-friendly civilian organization (Sihombing & Amalia, 2021; Kurniawan, 2023).

The reform has continued for over two decades through programs such as quick wins, the bureaucratic reform roadmap, and the current presisi vision (predictive, responsibility, transparent, just). However, public perception of Polri performance and integrity remains complex and fluctuating (Simatupang, 2020; Mukhsinin, 2023). Independent surveys often reveal a paradox: while Polri is considered important, issues such as corruption, abuse of power, discrimination, and human rights violations persist (Siregar, 2022; Indarto, 2024; Rizki et al., 2025). Public criticism via social media and demonstrations highlights the gap between the ideals of reform and its practical implementation.

Massive criticism frequently leads to viral hashtags demanding institutional reform, questioning its effectiveness. In modern policing, institutional legitimacy depends heavily

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on public support and trust (Lipsky, 2010; Purves & Davis, 2022; Herlydinata, 2025). Therefore, reform cannot be measured solely by internal indicators such as structural changes or budget allocation but must also be assessed from the public's perspective. Success requires moving from reactive criticism to constructive collaboration with civil society, academics, and media, in line with the community policing approach (Friedmann, 1992; Modise, 2023). Following its separation from ABRI, Polri was mandated to transform from a centralized security approach into a professional, modern, and trusted law enforcement agency, reinforced by the persistent vision (Hikam, 2021; Singh & Yadav, 2025). This transformation emphasizes the police's role as public servants and maintainers of civil order. However, survey data show that public trust remains at a medium level, fluctuating due to ongoing concerns about service quality, integrity, transparency, and accountability.

The relationship between Polri and the public is linked to Tyler's (1990) legitimacy theory, which posits that police effectiveness depends on public perceptions of fairness, legitimacy, and trustworthiness. Public trust serves as essential social capital for performing core functions: maintaining security, enforcing laws, and serving the community (Goldsmith, 2005; Herdiansyah, 2023). However, gaps between reform ideals and public experiences lead to criticism. While digital service innovations are appreciated, law enforcement and integrity remain weaknesses that influence overall public trust (Puslitbang Polri, 2024). Criticism does not always indicate antagonism. Globally, modern policing has shifted from coercive models toward community policing, emphasizing partnership and collaboration (Skogan, 2006; Liu et al., 2022). In Indonesia, criticism is increasingly balanced by collaborative efforts, such as police-community forums, IT-based public service applications, problem-solving programs with residents, and partnerships that leverage local wisdom (UNODC, 2023). This study is therefore relevant to examine whether public perception remains in the criticism phase or has moved toward recognizing and participating in collaboration as an indicator of modern, participatory policing (Winarno, 2018; Rijal & Saranani, 2023).

This study aims to examine public responses to the reform of the Indonesian National Police (Polri), including how the public perceives the reform, the forms and causes of criticism, and patterns of collaboration between Polri and the community, while also developing a model to shift perceptions from criticism to collaboration and providing strategic recommendations to strengthen Polri reform from the public's perspective. By analyzing the range of public responses from sharp criticism to active collaboration, the research hopes to offer precise policy input, bridge gaps in perception, and outline a path toward community-oriented policing, supporting sustainable transformation of Polri through a better understanding of public sentiment, addressing key issues, and fostering constructive cooperation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Public Perception of Polri Reform**

Previous studies show that public perception of Polri's reform is strongly influenced by how tangible reform efforts are experienced in everyday life. Dwyer (2017) mapped the historical challenges of Polri's reform after 1998 and emphasized that although structural changes such as separation from the military occurred, cultural and mental shifts within the institution have not fully taken place. As a result, implementation at the street-level bureaucracy is still hindered by old practices like centralized command and low public accountability. Similarly, Simatupang (2020) found that internal performance indicators, such as budget absorption and fulfillment of bureaucratic reform documents, often do not positively correlate with improvements in integrity and service quality. This suggests a gap between the official reform blueprint and how the public actually experiences change, which becomes a major source of criticism.

Siregar (2022) and Asad and Zia (2025), highlighted that social media accelerates the spread of sharp criticism about police misconduct, directly undermining institutional legitimacy when the police respond slowly or inadequately. Setara Institute (2023)

consistently reports human rights violations and impunity involving police officers, which contribute to declining public trust. Although digital services like online SIM and STNK processing reported by Puslitbang Polri (2024) can improve public perception of convenience, criticism of organizational culture continues, especially regarding integrity and accountability at the operational level. These studies collectively show that public perception of reform is shaped not only by formal indicators but by how reform impacts citizens' trust, daily experiences, and confidence in the institution.

### **Trust as a Bridge for Collaboration**

The transition from criticism to collaboration between the public and Polri is closely tied to the level of public trust in the institution. Procedural justice theory, popularized by Tyler (1990), argues that trust and compliance are not mainly determined by outcomes of law enforcement interactions, but by how those interactions are carried out. This includes giving the public a voice, neutral decision-making, respectful treatment, and perceptions that officers have good intentions. When the public perceives law enforcement processes as unfair, discriminatory, or opaque, criticism and distrust arise, weakening institutional legitimacy. Institutional legitimacy theory, developed by Goldsmith (2005) and Martin and Waldman (2023), explains that an institution can function effectively only if it is regarded as legitimate by the public it serves. Social legitimacy is more crucial than formal legal legitimacy.

Public criticism of organizational culture and abuse of power signals erosion of this social legitimacy, making collaboration difficult. Social trust theory, according to Mishler and Rose (2001), further shows that public trust is shaped not only by information campaigns but also by people's direct experiences and social-political context, explaining variation in the intensity of criticism across regions. Public relations communication theory, as outlined by Grunig and Hunt (1984), emphasizes two-way dialogue rather than one-way information dissemination. Without authentic dialogue, defensive responses to criticism can further strain relations. Thus, trust becomes the key bridge that must be built through consistent procedural justice, transparency, and accountability to enable the public to move from criticism toward willingness to collaborate.

### **Collaboration Patterns and Strategic Recommendations from a Public Perspective**

Studies on collaboration between the police and the public often refer to the community policing model, but evidence suggests that actual collaboration remains limited in substance. Friedmann (1992) argued that policing should shift from reactive law enforcement to proactive problem-solving with the community. In Indonesia, Sihombing and Amalia (2021) found that the Police and Community Partnership (POLMAS) often stop at ceremonial activities and have not fully empowered civil society in oversight or security policy formulation, indicating that collaboration remains top-down rather than participatory. While structured citizen collaboration can reduce social tensions and enhance collective security, as Skogan (2021) and Spanuth and Urbano (2024) note, implementation frequently falls short of this ideal. Global reports stress that post-reform policing must involve deep civic engagement as a control and feedback mechanism (UNODC, 2023). In practice, dominant collaboration forms are limited to official programs that do not significantly change institutional practices or empower communities, reflecting constraints in applying procedural justice in routine policing.

Based on the literature, strategic strengthening of Polri's reform should focus on public perception and experience. Structural changes and digital services, such as online SIM and STNK processing, can improve perceptions of service convenience, but criticism of organizational culture and operational integrity persists (Puslitbang Polri, 2024). Internal reform must go beyond formal indicators like documents or budget absorption to implement cultural change and consistent procedural justice (Tyler, 1990; Simatupang, 2020). Building social legitimacy through transparency and genuine accountability is essential, as without moral legitimacy, efforts to foster collaboration will be viewed skeptically (Goldsmith, 2005). Polri should engage in authentic dialogue with the public

and strengthen substantive community involvement in problem identification, solution formulation, and oversight to transform passive criticism into proactive collaboration (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Friedmann, 1992; Skogan, 2021).

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a constructivist paradigm to explore and deeply understand the public's meanings, experiences, and narratives about Polri reform. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for describing complex social phenomena from the public's perspective, including how they construct understandings of legitimacy, accountability, criticism, and collaboration. In the constructivist paradigm, public perceptions are considered socially formed through interactions, collective experiences, and individual interpretations, rather than as fixed objective facts. The focus of this study is not to test statistical hypotheses but to interpret how citizens understand Polri's legitimacy and accountability, and how these understandings influence their readiness to shift from criticism to substantive collaboration. The study highlights three key issues from the public's perspective: how they assess Polri reform programs and their daily impacts, the reasons for persistent criticism and the role of personal experience in shaping distrust, and the conditions that Polri must meet, particularly regarding procedural fairness and transparency, for the public to move from criticism to real collaborative participation.

This study uses secondary data to build the historical, normative, and empirical context of Polri's reform and to enrich comparisons with primary data collected in the field. The main secondary sources include academic literature such as journals, books, and theses about security sector reform, community policing, police governance, and civil-police relations; official policy documents such as presidential and Polri regulations that outline the direction, indicators, and achievements of reform programs; and media archives from both mainstream and alternative news outlets that reflect public sentiment on critical issues and Polri's collaborative efforts. Secondary data are collected through a systematic literature review involving searching, gathering, reading, recording, and processing relevant written materials. All collected documents are then analyzed using qualitative content analysis, which involves repeatedly reading the texts to identify themes, categories, and patterns related to criticism and collaboration. For analysis, this study follows the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), which includes three ongoing stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. These stages are carried out continuously from the start of data collection and are intended to simplify, organize, and verify the findings so they can answer the research question about how the public perceives the transition from criticism to collaboration in the context of Polri's reform.

## **RESULTS**

### **Public Perception of Polri's Reform**

Public perception of Polri's reform remains divided, which can be explained by Tyler's (1990) legitimacy theory and procedural justice theory (Tyler & Huo, 2002). A report by Puslitbang Polri (2024) notes improvements in fast and efficient digital services, yet substantial criticism persists regarding organizational culture and law enforcement processes. As Tyler (1990) emphasized, the public demands not only outcomes, such as the arrest of perpetrators, but also fair, transparent, and respectful treatment (Goldsmith, 2005). When procedures are perceived as unfair such as insufficient explanations or signs of power abuse public trust collapses, eroding Polri's legitimacy, even if administrative services improve. This indicates that reforms have not fully addressed core aspects of procedural justice. The shift from criticism to collaboration requires strong social trust (Mishler & Rose, 2001). Although the Community Policing concept, as theoretically proposed by Skogan (2006), promotes partnership and problem-solving, secondary data from UNODC (2023) show limited civic engagement. Polri's collaborative efforts are often perceived as one-way public relations rather than genuine dialogue (Grunig & Hunt,

1984). Criticism from the Chief Strategy Officer (CSO) regarding sensitive cases shows that public experiences frequently contradict the official reform narrative (Mishler & Rose, 2001), and collaboration can only be effective if foundational trust is maintained (Skogan, 2006).

From the public's perspective, reform entails transforming Polri from a militaristic institution into a dialogic and accountable one. Public criticism highlights fairness and trust as key variables of legitimacy. Therefore, Polri needs to shift communication from one-way to two-way symmetric, recognizing criticism as valid feedback and transparently aligning actions with public expectations (Tyler, 1990). Analysis of surveys, CSO reports, and media coverage shows that public perception remains within the spectrum of critical skepticism. Ombudsman Republik Indonesia (2023) acknowledges improvements in administrative services, such as SIM and Police Clearance Certificate (*Surat Keterangan Catatan Kepolisian/SKCK*) processing, but negative perceptions persist, focusing on law enforcement accountability and abuse of power. Public criticism now demands structural improvements in moral integrity, transparency, and internal control mechanisms, indicating that internal reforms have not fully translated into credibility and trust (Hariyanto, 2022).

Official Polri Documents (*Reformasi Birokrasi Polri/RBP*) emphasize three main pillars: institutional structuring, human resource management, and governance improvement. However, public perception highlights a gap between promises on paper and realities on the ground. Conflicts of interest, excessive use of force, and insufficient action against internal corruption remain triggers for fluctuating trust (ICW, 2021). Public evaluation of reform success is based on tangible results in delivering justice and protection without discrimination, not merely policy outputs, consistent with literature emphasizing meaningful civil participation in security sector reform evaluation (Putro, 2020).

### **Conditions for Transition to Collaboration: Trust as a Bridge**

Literature on community policing and the co-production of security emphasizes that the transition from criticism to collaboration heavily depends on the restoration of trust. The public will not engage in genuine collaboration if Polri is still perceived as self-serving or unaccountable. Key conditions for meaningful collaboration include having clear and transparent sanctions for officers who violate procedures, ensuring openness in how high-profile cases are handled, and establishing legally guaranteed civilian oversight to strengthen accountability and public trust in policing efforts (ELSAM, 2020). From the public's perspective, collaboration is not merely an invitation to participate but a reciprocal response based on Polri's demonstrated integrity.

Public criticism of Polri most frequently manifests as dissatisfaction with procedural justice. While internal reports, such as Puslitbang Polri (2024), indicate public appreciation for improvements in digital services, strong criticism arises concerning case handling and law enforcement processes. This aligns with Tyler (2014), who found that public trust is more influenced by perceptions of procedural fairness, transparency, respect, and adequate explanation than by the final outcome of law enforcement. Criticism often appears as viral social media narratives, complaints to external entities, and media coverage highlighting controversial cases, reflecting a demand for more ethical and egalitarian interactions (Goldsmith, 2005).

The root causes of criticism can be analyzed using Tyler's (1990) legitimacy theory and social trust theory (Mishler & Rose, 2001). Criticism emerges from an erosion of trust and fairness, which are central to institutional legitimacy. Puslitbang Polri (2024) highlights organizational culture resistant to change and a lack of accountability for abuse of power as major obstacles. Negative personal experiences at the local level exacerbate social distrust, creating conditions for strong public criticism. Criticism, therefore, is not merely a technical issue but a reaction to performance duality, administrative efficiency alongside failures in integrity (Mishler & Rose, 2001).

According to the communication theory of public relations public criticism signals rejection of one-way, monologic organizational-public relationships and a demand for

dialogic engagement (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Repeated calls for meaningful civic participation by UNODC (2023) indicate that the public wants to be an equal partner in the reform process. Criticism is thus a prerequisite for collaboration, according to Skogan (2006), only when Polri demonstrates transparency and accountability in addressing criticism, trust can be rebuilt. Without procedural improvements, community policing initiatives risk being perceived as ceremonial, and criticism will continue to dominate public discourse (Tyler & Huo, 2002).

Public criticism has evolved from general media discourse to specific, institutionalized, and digital demands. In the digital era, real-time, large-scale criticism via social media and online petitions targets controversial cases, focusing on procedural and ethical accountability (ICW, 2021). This highlights gaps between Polri's reform narrative and actual practices, particularly in transparency and accountability. The primary drivers of ongoing criticism are inconsistent law enforcement performance and organizational resistance to change. While internal reports by Puslitbang Polri (2024) note improvements in technology-based services, criticism is strongest in cases involving abuse of power, conflicts of interest, and internal corruption. This supports Tyler (1990) and Goldsmith (2005), who argue that institutional legitimacy relies on procedural fairness and moral integrity. Criticism functions as an informal mechanism enforcing accountability and establishing the foundation for genuine partnerships, rather than top-down or prescriptive relationships (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Elsam, 2020; UNODC, 2023).

### **Polri Community Collaboration Patterns and Strategic Recommendations**

Based on the literature review, collaboration patterns between the Polri and the public remain dominated by a top-down approach that emphasizes service delivery rather than equal partnership. Although community policing theory by Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1990) and Skogan (2006) highlights community empowerment and joint problem-solving, in practice, collaboration is often interpreted merely as mobilizing public support for Polri programs. A report by Puslitbang Polri (2024) shows that the public generally evaluates digital service improvements positively, yet institutional legitimacy remains fragile due to persistent criticism of organizational culture (Tyler, 1990). Inconsistent application of procedural justice, including limited transparency and disrespectful treatment, weakens collaboration and reduces its effectiveness in mitigating social tensions (Skogan, 2006).

The main obstacle to genuine collaboration is a deficit of social trust, triggered by low credibility in key elements of the trust model proposed by Mishler and Rose (2001) and Tyler and Huo (2002). Institutional legitimacy strongly depends on fair and transparent interactions (Goldsmith, 2005). When civil society organizations express sharp criticism, and Polri responds defensively or without transparency, public willingness to engage declines. Existing collaboration patterns are largely one-way (monologic), where Polri seeks to persuade the public rather than build an equal two-way dialogue that integrates critical feedback (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). This limits meaningful civic engagement, even though UNODC (2023) emphasizes that deep civic involvement is essential in post-reform policing. The ideal collaboration model is constructed as a critical partnership, where cooperation emerges from real accountability measured openly. The public does not expect the absence of problems, but rather clear procedural accountability in addressing emerging issues. Polri must view the public not merely as passive service recipients, but as active partners in oversight. Sustainable collaboration arises when procedural justice is consistently applied across interactions, from minor cases to major criticisms (Skogan, 2006). By accepting criticism as legitimate input and responding transparently, Polri can rebuild social trust and shift relations from perceptual conflict to productive collaboration.

Public criticism often appears through social media, formal complaints to oversight institutions, and media coverage highlighting procedural injustice and inconsistencies between reform narratives and field practices (Goldsmith, 2005; ICW, 2021). The main causes of criticism include inconsistent law enforcement performance and organizational

resistance to change (Puslitbang Polri, 2024). Such criticism is not merely technical regarding service delivery but touches deeper issues of integrity and morality embedded in organizational culture (Tyler, 1990). Transforming public perception from criticism to collaboration, according to Tyler's legitimacy theory (1990), requires fundamentally addressing failures in procedural justice. Law enforcement interactions must be fair, transparent, and accountable (Tyler & Huo, 2002; Goldsmith, 2005). When procedural justice is applied consistently, social trust develops through repeated positive public experiences (Mishler & Rose, 2001). Public criticism can then be interpreted as constructive feedback that enables equal collaboration based on symmetrical two-way communication, allowing society to participate in joint problem-solving with Polri (Skogan, 2006).

Public criticism thus functions both as an indicator of procedural gaps and as a catalyst for institutional transformation. Transparent responses to criticism, such as firm sanctions for violations, provide tangible evidence of procedural justice, strengthen legitimacy, and facilitate the transition toward consolidated trust and collaborative engagement. The ideal collaboration model is a strategic, critical partnership in which civil society actively participates in monitoring and shaping local security policies. Polri must proactively seek critical input, utilize social trust gained from positive experiences, and ensure that every interaction reflects procedural justice and transparency (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Mishler & Rose, 2001).

The main strategic recommendation to strengthen Polri reform from the public perspective is to institutionalize procedural justice and reinforce accountability in practice, not merely in rhetoric. Tyler (2014) emphasizes that perceptions of procedural justice such as transparency, respectful treatment, and adequate explanation, are more important for legitimacy and public trust than efficiency alone (Goldsmith, 2005). Persistent criticism of organizational culture, as reported by Puslitbang Polri (2024), indicates that justice and trust remain fragile. Therefore, Polri needs to implement independent internal oversight systems with transparent sanction mechanisms and conduct ethics audits based on procedural justice in every law enforcement process, so that fairness is consistently experienced in interactions between officers and the public.

Transforming communication from a one-way model into a balanced two-way dialogue is crucial to converting criticism into collaboration. Current communication remains largely one-directional, which continues to hinder the development of social trust (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Mishler & Rose, 2001). Polri should welcome sharp criticism from civil society organizations and academics as valid policy input, maintain permanent and safe consultation platforms for joint problem-solving, and ensure consistency between policy promises and public experience on the ground (Mishler & Rose, 2001; Skogan, 2006). Openness to dialogue reflects the principle of civic engagement required in modern policing.

Institutionalizing collaboration as a strategic, critical partnership is also essential because effective collaboration cannot rely solely on formal or ceremonial community policing programs (Skogan, 2006). Partnerships must grant binding oversight authority to external mechanisms or civil society representatives, including strengthening public oversight boards empowered to recommend sanctions or audit policies based on public complaints. Integrating critical public perspectives, such as complaint data and civil society reports, into training and promotion processes is also vital. By making criticism an integral part of the accountability system, Polri ensures that reform is measured and guided by public perspectives, thereby strengthening legitimacy over time.

## **DISCUSSION**

The study shows that public perception of Polri's reform remains mixed. While the public recognizes improvements in administrative services, such as digital SIM and SKCK processing, significant criticism persists regarding law enforcement practices and organizational culture. This aligns with Tyler's (1990) legitimacy theory, which emphasizes that institutional legitimacy depends not only on outcomes but also on fair,

transparent, and respectful processes. Public criticism, particularly regarding excessive use of power and unclear procedures, indicates a legitimacy gap, where reforms at the administrative level have not fully translated into public trust (Goldsmith, 2005; Hariyanto, 2022). According to Tyler and Huo (2002), procedural justice theory, perceived fairness in processes strongly shapes public trust, often more than the outcomes of law enforcement actions.

Criticism extends beyond technical service issues to concerns about integrity and ethical conduct. These issues are frequently expressed through social media, reports to oversight institutions like the Ombudsman and Komnas HAM, and media coverage of controversial cases (ICW, 2021; UNODC, 2023; Puslitbang Polri, 2024). The findings suggest that public criticism functions as a vital indicator of procedural gaps. Transparent and accountable responses from Polri can demonstrate its commitment to procedural justice, which is essential to rebuild trust and facilitate genuine collaboration (Goldsmith, 2005; Tyler, 2014). In terms of collaboration, the literature highlights that moving from criticism to partnership requires strong social trust (Mishler & Rose, 2001). However, Polri's current approach remains largely top-down and service-oriented. While administrative efficiency has improved, public engagement is often limited to one-way communication rather than meaningful dialogue, making collaboration appear symbolic rather than substantive (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Skogan, 2006; Abdilah et al., 2025). Public criticism should be understood not as opposition, but as an opportunity to address procedural weaknesses and enhance institutional legitimacy (Tyler & Huo, 2002; ELSAM, 2020).

The transformation of public perception can be conceptualized in three stages. First, procedural reform that addresses fairness, transparency, and respectful interactions. Second, trust consolidation, where consistent procedural fairness and positive experiences build credibility and reduce skepticism (Mishler & Rose, 2001). Third, dialogic collaboration, where criticism is converted into constructive feedback and citizens actively participate in problem-solving through symmetric, two-way communication (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Skogan, 2006). This model emphasizes that meaningful collaboration is only possible when trust is established and procedural justice is consistently practiced.

Strategically, the study recommends institutionalizing procedural justice and accountability through independent monitoring, ethics-based audits, and clear sanctions for violations (Goldsmith, 2005; Puslitbang Polri, 2024). Communication should be transformed from a monologic to a dialogic model, creating permanent and safe platforms for public participation. Critical partnerships should be formalized with binding external oversight, integrating public feedback into policy, training, and officer evaluation processes (Elsam, 2020; UNODC, 2023). These measures ensure that criticism becomes part of a transparent accountability system, reinforcing legitimacy and trust over time.

The research highlights that successful Polri reform is not only about improving administrative efficiency but also about building legitimacy through procedural fairness, transparency, dialogic communication, and strategic collaboration with the public. By embracing public criticism as a driver for transformation, Polri can foster genuine critical partnerships, turning skepticism into constructive engagement and creating sustainable trust between the institution and society (Tyler, 1990; Mishler & Rose, 2001; Tyler & Huo, 2002; Skogan, 2006).

## **CONCLUSION**

This study finds that public perception of Polri's reform is still shaped by critical skepticism due to a legitimate gap between internal policy commitments and realities on the ground. Although improvements in digital administrative services are recognized, fundamental criticisms remain strong regarding procedural justice, organizational culture, and the consistency of integrity. Public criticism does not reject the existence of Polri, but demands a deeper transformation toward an institution that is fair, transparent, and trustworthy. In this context, criticism functions as a dialogic prerequisite for meaningful collaboration.

The main implication of these findings is that the success of Polri's reform cannot be measured solely by service efficiency but must be grounded in legitimacy based on procedural justice and social trust. The current Polri community collaboration pattern, which remains largely top-down and monologic, has not yet been able to generate sustainable civic engagement. Therefore, a shift toward symmetric dialogic communication and critical partnerships based on accountability is required. Based on these conclusions, it is suggested that Polri's reform should prioritize the institutionalization of procedural justice, the strengthening of transparent internal and external oversight, and the transformation of public communication so that criticism is treated as valid policy input rather than a threat. For future research, it is recommended to conduct empirical studies on the effectiveness of procedural justice at the grassroots level, comparative analyses of civil oversight models, and longitudinal studies on the relationship between public criticism, reform consistency, and the development of social trust in Polri.

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