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Topic: *Strengthening Legal Frameworks for Combating Human Trafficking and Enhancing Protection of Women and Children*

Synchronization Of Institutional Authorities in the Protection of Women and Children from the Threat of Exploitation

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Abstract. *Women and children are among the most vulnerable groups and frequently become the primary targets of various forms of exploitation, including economic and sexual exploitation. Although the state has established numerous institutions tasked with providing protection, overlapping authorities among these agencies often result in delays and inefficiencies in case handling. This article examines the urgency of synchronizing institutional authorities in the protection of women and children from the threat of exploitation. Using a normative legal research method, this study highlights three main issues. First, it analyzes the existing condition in which institutions such as the Indonesian National Police, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA), the Ministry of Social Affairs (Kemensos), and the Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK) frequently operate independently without effective coordination. Second, it explores the adverse effects of sectoral ego and institutional fragmentation, which ultimately harm victims by prolonging bureaucratic processes and delaying recovery efforts. Third, it proposes the establishment of an integrated one-stop service system based on the concept of an Integrated Criminal Justice System to harmonize the roles and responsibilities of relevant institutions. This study concludes that effective protection requires the elimination of bureaucratic barriers through a unified regulatory framework that mandates cooperation among all state institutions. Such synchronization is essential to ensuring victim-centered justice, accelerating recovery processes, and strengthening the state's commitment to protecting women and children from all forms of exploitation.*

Keywords: *Criminal; Institutional; Integrated; Justice; Synchronization.*

1. Introduction

Women and children constitute vulnerable groups that frequently become targets of various forms of exploitation, including economic exploitation, sexual exploitation, human trafficking,

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forced labor, online sexual abuse, and other forms of violence that violate human dignity. Their vulnerability is often exacerbated by social inequality, poverty, limited access to education, gender discrimination, and weak legal awareness. As a result, women and children are disproportionately exposed to exploitation and often experience significant obstacles in accessing justice and protection mechanisms.

The Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945 explicitly guarantees the protection of human rights, including the rights of women and children to security, dignity, and freedom from exploitation. These constitutional guarantees are further elaborated through various statutory regulations, including Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection, Law Number 21 of 2007 concerning the Eradication of Human Trafficking Crimes, Law Number 12 of 2022 concerning Sexual Violence Crimes, and Law Number 31 of 2014 concerning the Protection of Witnesses and Victims. These legal instruments reflect the state's commitment to safeguarding vulnerable groups and ensuring their access to justice.

In order to implement these legal mandates, the government has established a variety of institutions with specific responsibilities related to victim protection. The Indonesian National Police are responsible for law enforcement and criminal investigations; the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA) serve as the leading sector in policy formulation and prevention programs; the Ministry of Social Affairs (Kemensos) provides social rehabilitation and welfare services; and the Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK) offer physical protection, psychological assistance, and support for restitution claims. Although these institutions share a common objective, namely the protection and recovery of victims, their authorities often overlap in practice.

The multiplicity of institutions involved in victim protection has generated significant challenges concerning coordination and authority synchronization. Rather than functioning as an integrated protection system, institutions frequently operate independently based on their respective mandates and bureaucratic procedures. Consequently, victims often face complicated administrative processes, repeated interviews, delays in receiving assistance, and uncertainty regarding which institution bears primary responsibility for their protection and recovery. Such conditions undermine the effectiveness of state protection and may even result in secondary victimization.

The absence of an integrated institutional framework also contributes to sectoral ego among agencies. Each institution tends to prioritize its own procedures, performance indicators, and administrative requirements, often at the expense of efficient victim-centered services. As a result, protection efforts that should be delivered promptly and comprehensively become

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fragmented and inefficient. This situation demonstrates the urgent need for a synchronized institutional mechanism capable of integrating legal protection, social rehabilitation, psychological assistance, and victim recovery services under a coordinated framework.

Against this background, this article examines the importance of synchronizing institutional authorities in protecting women and children from exploitation. The study seeks to analyze the existing institutional framework, identify the challenges arising from overlapping authorities, and propose an integrated protection model capable of enhancing coordination among relevant institutions. Through institutional synchronization, it is expected that women and children will receive more effective, efficient, and comprehensive protection, thereby ensuring the realization of justice and human dignity.

2. Research Methods

This study employs a normative legal research method, which focuses on the examination of legal principles, legal systems, and the synchronization of written legal norms governing the protection of women and children. Normative legal research is particularly appropriate for analyzing institutional authority arrangements and identifying inconsistencies or overlaps within the existing regulatory framework. The research utilizes two primary approaches. The first is the statutory approach, which examines laws and regulations governing the functions and authorities of institutions involved in victim protection, including the Indonesian National Police, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the Witness and Victim Protection Agency. The second is the conceptual approach, which seeks to develop an ideal framework for institutional cooperation and integrated victim protection. The study relies on primary legal materials, including the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection, Law Number 21 of 2007 concerning the Eradication of Human Trafficking Crimes, Law Number 31 of 2014 concerning the Protection of Witnesses and Victims, and Law Number 12 of 2022 concerning Sexual Violence Crimes. Secondary legal materials consist of legal textbooks, scholarly journals, research reports, and other academic publications relevant to institutional coordination and victim protection. Tertiary legal materials, including legal dictionaries and legal encyclopedias, are also utilized to support the analysis. Data were collected through library research and analyzed using a qualitative-deductive method. The analysis aims to identify the root causes of overlapping institutional authorities, evaluate their implications for victim protection, and formulate practical recommendations for institutional synchronization. The findings are presented descriptively and systematically to provide a comprehensive understanding of the

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challenges and prospects of integrated protection mechanisms for women and children in Indonesia.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Existing Conditions and the Overlapping of Institutional Authorities

At present, the protection framework for women and children in Indonesia involves numerous state institutions, each operating under different legal mandates, authorities, and budgetary allocations. From a governance perspective, this division of responsibilities appears comprehensive. At the law enforcement stage, the Indonesian National Police, particularly through the Women and Children Protection Unit (Unit PPA), are authorized to receive reports, conduct investigations, and undertake criminal inquiries. In the area of social rehabilitation and recovery services, responsibility lies with the Ministry of Social Affairs (Kemensos) and regional social service agencies. At the policy level, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPA) serve as the leading sector responsible for prevention strategies, empowerment programs, and national policy development. Meanwhile, the Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK) is tasked with providing physical protection, psychological assistance, medical support, and facilitating victims' restitution claims.

From a theoretical perspective, such specialization appears ideal because each institution can concentrate on its particular expertise. Law enforcement agencies focus on prosecuting offenders, social welfare institutions facilitate rehabilitation, and victim protection agencies ensure security and recovery. However, practical realities demonstrate significant shortcomings in the coordination of these functions. The absence of a comprehensive legal framework clearly defining institutional responsibilities and operational procedures often results in fragmented responses. Instead of forming a coherent protection network, institutions frequently operate independently according to their respective mandates and bureaucratic procedures.

One of the most apparent examples of institutional overlap occurs immediately after victims are rescued from situations of exploitation. Victims often require immediate placement in safe houses to prevent intimidation or retaliation from perpetrators and criminal networks. However, law enforcement officers frequently encounter difficulties in coordinating rapidly with social welfare institutions or victim protection agencies due to administrative requirements, procedural approvals, and bureaucratic formalities. As a result, victims may be temporarily placed in facilities that are unsuitable for children or trauma recovery, thereby undermining the quality of protection provided.

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These difficulties are further aggravated by institutional adherence to separate standard operating procedures. Frontline officers often face dilemmas between responding quickly to victims' needs and complying with their institutions' internal administrative requirements. Different agencies are also evaluated according to distinct performance indicators. Police investigators may prioritize the completion of criminal case files, whereas social workers focus on psychosocial assessments and rehabilitation plans. Consequently, institutions become preoccupied with achieving organizational targets rather than prioritizing the immediate welfare of victims.

Ultimately, the existing institutional arrangement creates a fragile protection system in which victims frequently fall through bureaucratic gaps. The absence of a coordinating authority capable of directing and integrating the activities of law enforcement agencies, victim protection institutions, and social welfare services contributes to delays, inefficiencies, and inconsistent outcomes. As a result, women and children who should receive immediate and comprehensive protection often experience prolonged uncertainty and inadequate support.

3.2. The Impact of Sectoral Ego and the Absence of Institutional Synergy on Victim Recovery

One of the most serious consequences of poor institutional synchronization is the phenomenon of secondary victimization. Women and children rescued from exploitation often suffer severe psychological trauma and require immediate protection and professional support. However, due to the lack of integrated data-sharing mechanisms, victims are frequently required to recount their experiences repeatedly to different institutions. They may first provide testimony to police investigators, then repeat the same narrative to social workers, psychologists, medical personnel, and victim protection officers.

This repetitive process not only prolongs emotional distress but may also exacerbate trauma by forcing victims to relive painful experiences multiple times. Instead of functioning as a protective system, fragmented institutional arrangements unintentionally impose additional burdens on victims. Such practices contradict contemporary victim-centered approaches that emphasize minimizing re-traumatization throughout legal and recovery processes.

Institutional fragmentation also undermines the effectiveness of criminal justice proceedings. Cases often become delayed because agencies shift responsibility to one another. Investigators may argue that victims are not psychologically prepared to provide testimony, while psychologists may contend that adequate recovery cannot begin until security guarantees have been established by victim protection agencies. These coordination failures frequently

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transform what should be a relatively efficient process into a lengthy bureaucratic ordeal that may take months or even years to resolve.

Another significant consequence is the absence of an integrated database system. Law enforcement agencies maintain criminal records, social service institutions manage rehabilitation records, and policy agencies collect statistical information independently. The lack of interoperability among these systems limits the state's ability to identify trafficking networks, monitor patterns of exploitation, and develop evidence-based policy responses. Criminal organizations often exploit these institutional gaps because they understand that information-sharing mechanisms among government agencies remain weak and fragmented.

Furthermore, poor coordination directly affects victims' access to restitution and compensation. Accurate restitution claims depend on the integration of medical assessments, psychological evaluations, and economic loss calculations prepared by different institutions. In practice, inadequate communication frequently results in incomplete documentation, procedural delays, or inconsistencies between prosecution files and restitution requests. Consequently, victims may lose opportunities to obtain compensation to which they are legally entitled.

These circumstances demonstrate that sectoral ego and institutional fragmentation ultimately undermine the state's protective function. Instead of experiencing efficient and compassionate support, victims are often confronted with complex administrative barriers that discourage them from pursuing justice. Some victims even withdraw complaints or abandon legal proceedings altogether due to frustration with bureaucratic obstacles. Such outcomes represent a failure of the protection system to fulfill its fundamental purpose.

3.3. Constructing an Integrated Institutional Synchronization Framework Based on Justice

Addressing institutional fragmentation requires a comprehensive restructuring of the protection system through the adoption of an Integrated Criminal Justice System approach. This model requires a paradigm shift from an offender-oriented framework toward a victim-oriented system that places recovery, dignity, and protection at the center of institutional action. Within this framework, law enforcement and social services are not treated as separate functions but as interconnected components of a unified protection mechanism.

A crucial step toward achieving this objective is the establishment of genuine One-Stop Crisis Centers at the regional level. Such centers should function as integrated service hubs where representatives from the police, prosecution service, social welfare agencies, victim protection agencies, medical professionals, psychologists, and social workers operate under a single

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institutional framework. Unlike conventional coordination forums, these centers should possess clear legal authority and operational responsibilities that facilitate immediate and direct cooperation among stakeholders.

The effectiveness of One-Stop Crisis Centers depends upon the creation of a comprehensive legal framework capable of harmonizing institutional mandates. This framework may take the form of a Presidential Regulation or comprehensive legislative reform designed specifically to address the protection of vulnerable groups. Such regulations should clearly define leadership structures, institutional responsibilities, funding mechanisms, and inter-agency coordination procedures. Resource-sharing arrangements must also be established to ensure that victims receive immediate access to safe housing, medical treatment, psychological support, and legal assistance without bureaucratic delays.

An integrated institutional model would significantly improve the quality of victim protection. For example, when a woman or child is rescued from exploitation, all necessary services could be provided within a single facility. Medical examinations, psychological assessments, legal interviews, and victim protection procedures could be conducted in a coordinated manner. Through the implementation of a single-interview method, victims would only be required to recount their experiences once, while the recorded testimony could be utilized by investigators, prosecutors, psychologists, and victim protection officers. This approach would substantially reduce the risk of secondary victimization while improving procedural efficiency.

Ultimately, institutional synchronization represents the practical realization of justice-oriented governance. The state must function not as a fragmented bureaucratic apparatus but as a responsive and coordinated protector of vulnerable individuals. When reporting mechanisms, criminal investigations, emergency protection, rehabilitation services, and restitution procedures are integrated into a unified system, victims receive timely and comprehensive support. At the same time, perpetrators and criminal networks encounter a more effective enforcement structure capable of disrupting exploitative activities. Institutional synchronization therefore constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for ensuring meaningful protection for women and children and for strengthening public confidence in the state's commitment to justice and human rights.

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4. Conclusion

The protection of women and children from exploitation cannot be effectively realized as long as institutional fragmentation and sectoral ego continue to characterize the state's protection system. The overlapping authorities among law enforcement agencies, social welfare institutions, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, and the Witness and Victim Protection Agency have often resulted in delayed responses, inefficient service delivery, and prolonged suffering for victims. Rather than providing immediate and comprehensive protection, the current institutional arrangement frequently creates bureaucratic obstacles that hinder access to justice and recovery. This study demonstrates that the lack of synchronization among institutions not only weakens law enforcement efforts but also contributes to secondary victimization, delays in rehabilitation, and obstacles to obtaining restitution and other forms of legal protection. The absence of an integrated database system, inconsistent coordination mechanisms, and differing institutional priorities have further undermined the effectiveness of the national protection framework. Consequently, victims are often forced to navigate a complex and fragmented bureaucratic process at a time when they require urgent assistance and support. To address these challenges, the state must establish a synchronized institutional framework grounded in an Integrated Criminal Justice System approach. The creation of legally binding One-Stop Crisis Centers, supported by a comprehensive regulatory framework, would enable all relevant institutions to coordinate their functions effectively under a unified protection mechanism. Such a system would facilitate rapid response, eliminate unnecessary administrative barriers, and ensure that victims receive medical, psychological, social, and legal assistance in a timely and coordinated manner. Ultimately, institutional synchronization is not merely an administrative necessity but a constitutional and moral imperative. Effective protection requires the state to transcend sectoral interests and prioritize the welfare, dignity, and rights of victims. Through strong inter-agency cooperation, integrated service delivery, and victim-centered policies, women and children will be able to experience genuine protection from exploitation. In this way, the state can fulfill its responsibility to uphold human dignity, ensure access to justice, and strengthen the protection of human rights for all citizens.

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