


Law Enforcement Professional Ethics: An Analysis of Legal Philosophy on Morality and Integrity in Law Enforcement Practice

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Professional Ethics, Philosophy of Law, Morality, Law Enforcement</p>	<p>Professional ethics are a fundamental pillar in maintaining the integrity and public trust in law enforcement agencies. This article aims to analyze the morality and ethical obligations of law enforcement through a legal philosophy approach, particularly through Immanuel Kant's theory of morality, John Rawls's concept of justice, and Lon Fuller's principle of legal internal morality. Using normative-philosophical research methods, this study examines the relationship between moral values, legal norms, and the practice of the law enforcement profession in Indonesia. The results of the analysis show that integrity, honesty, and impartiality are not only demands of the code of ethics, but also a manifestation of the legal morality that underlies the legitimacy of law enforcement actions. This article asserts that without a strong moral foundation, the law loses its value of justice and is incapable of carrying out its social functions. Thus, professional ethics are a primary requirement for creating a fair and humane legal system.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Law enforcement plays a fundamental role in maintaining order, ensuring security, and upholding justice in society. However, the effectiveness of law enforcement is not only determined by the applicable rules, but also by the morality, integrity, and professionalism of the officers who carry out their duties. Within the framework of legal philosophy, morality serves as the foundation that lends legitimacy to legal actions. Without morality, the law loses its ethical value and has the potential to become a discriminatory tool of power (Aldyan and Negi, 2022; Zaki and Saidin, 2024). Therefore, the study of the ethics of the law enforcement profession is becoming increasingly urgent in the midst of the rampant cases of ethical violations that have emerged in Indonesia.

In recent years, the public has been shocked by several Viral News stories that tarnish the image of law enforcement. One of the most significant cases is the engineering of the murder of Brigadier J in 2022, which involved police officials and became international news. Al Jazeera reports on how this case exposes abuse of authority in Indonesian police

institutions (Llewellyn, 2022). The case was also raised by Tempo, which highlighted how several police officials were allegedly involved in the process of fabricating the case and dismissing evidence (Muthiariny, 2022)

Not only that, but ethical violations also appeared in the Prosecutor Pinangki bribery case (2020–2021), which gained widespread attention because it involved a legal process that was allegedly manipulated for personal gain. CNN Indonesia reported that Prosecutor Pinangki received bribes in handling the Djoko Tjandra case, thereby raising intense criticism of the prosecutor's office's integrity (Yuherawan, 2020; Price, 2024). Other cases that have highlighted the moral crisis in law enforcement include the KPK OTT's investigation against a judge in 2023, which again underscores the weakness of internal supervision. Kompas wrote that the judge allegedly accepted bribes in handling the case, triggering major questions about the integrity of the judiciary (Wahyudi, 2019; Khoirin and Junaedi, 2022; Rukmono, Suwadi and Saiful Islam, 2024)

These viral news stories reveal a significant discrepancy between the ideal norms in legal philosophy and real-world practice in the field. Immanuel Kant's thoughts on moral obligations (*Deontology*) affirm that moral action should not be based on self-interest. However, violations of law enforcement ethics demonstrate that the interests of power or personal gain often compromise moral principles. This is also contrary to John Rawls's idea that justice can only be realized if the process is fair and impartial (Morozov and Denisenko, 2020; Sukardi and Purnama, 2022; Loacker, 2023).

In Lon Fuller's perspective, the internal morality of the law requires consistent, transparent, and enforced rules by actors with integrity. However, viral cases involving law enforcement officers show that these internal morality principles are often violated. When actors who are in control of the law act unethically, then the legal system as a whole loses its legitimacy in the eyes of society. This demonstrates the importance of placing professional ethics as an integral part of legal philosophy and law enforcement practice (Akhmad, Fernando and Teeraphan, 2023; SANJAYA et al., 2023).

In the digital era, professional ethical challenges have become increasingly complex due to the accelerated dissemination of information through social media. Every action of law enforcement can go viral in a matter of minutes, demonstrating that society now plays a significant role in social control. This phenomenon not only reflects the increase in public awareness but also highlights that ethical violations by law enforcement officers can no longer be overlooked as they once were. Therefore, strengthening the moral integrity of the legal system is an urgent need for its sustainability (Lukito, 2019; Rodiyah, Idris and Smith, 2023; Gaffar and Ramadhan, 2024).

By examining these various phenomena, the study of the ethics of the law enforcement profession is not only relevant but also crucial in restoring public trust in legal

institutions. This article aims to analyze the relationship between morality, integrity, and legal legitimacy from the perspective of legal philosophy. Drawing on the thoughts of figures such as Kant, Rawls, and Fuller, this paper aims to provide a normative foundation and offer practical recommendations for enhancing the quality of professional ethics in law enforcement in Indonesia.

METHODS

The research methods employed in this article are normative-philosophical, an approach that focuses on analyzing the fundamental concepts, moral principles, and theories underlying law enforcement practice. The normative approach is used to examine professional ethical norms, the code of ethics of law enforcement officials, and moral values related to obligations and integrity in the implementation of law enforcement duties. Meanwhile, the philosophical approach aims to explore and interpret the thoughts of legal philosophy figures, such as Immanuel Kant, John Rawls, and Lon Fuller, in order to understand the relationship between morality and the legitimacy of law enforcement (Madhloom, 2022; Gallego, 2023; Jędrzczak, 2023).

Data collection in this study was carried out through Library Research. The primary sources used include legal philosophy books, scientific journals, and codes of ethics for the legal profession (specifically, the code of ethics for judges, prosecutors, police, and advocates), as well as relevant laws and regulations. In addition, this study also uses Actual news from credible media as supporting data to illustrate the empirical reality of professional ethics violations that occur in Indonesia. The use of this viral news is not as quantitative data, but as a phenomenological illustration that strengthens the philosophical analysis of the crisis of the morality of the law apparatus (Bahasoan et al., 2019; Alm and Brown, 2021; Brändle and Schmidt, 2021; Ferrara, 2022).

The data obtained was analyzed using Conceptual analysis and Hermeneutic Analysis, namely, techniques for interpreting texts, concepts, and moral values related to the ethics of the law enforcement profession. Conceptual analysis is employed to elucidate concepts such as morality, integrity, justice, and obligation. In contrast, hermeneutic analysis is utilized to interpret the thoughts of philosophers and relate them to the practical reality of law implementation in Indonesia. With this method, the research produces an in-depth understanding of the importance of morality as the basis of legitimacy and justice in the law enforcement system (Bennett, 2019; Crummey, 2022; Massimi, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Law Enforcement Professional Ethics in the Perspective of Moral Philosophy

The ethics of the law enforcement profession are a set of moral values that serve as a guideline for the apparatus in carrying out their duties. In the context of moral philosophy, professional ethics is understood not only as a technical rule written in a code of ethics, but also as a moral principle inherent in the duties and responsibilities of a law enforcement officer. These ethics reflect integrity, honesty, objectivity, and a commitment to upholding justice for

all levels of society. Thus, professional ethics for law enforcement have a much deeper moral dimension than just formal compliance with the rules.

In the view of **Immanuel Kant**, a morally correct action is an action performed based on an obligation (*Duty*) and not solely because of a particular consequence or advantage. Kant affirms that every action must be a universal law, according to the categorical imperative. The application of Kant's thought in the law enforcement profession requires that officers act honestly, fairly, and impartially in all situations, even when the action is not in their favor. A judge, prosecutor, or police officer who decides a case based on universal moral principles demonstrates that they respect human dignity as an end, not as a means (Reglitz, 2019; Robinson and Shah, 2019).

Meanwhile, **John Rawls**, through the theory of "justice as fairness," provides the perspective that law enforcement must pay attention to substantive and procedural justice. Rawls emphasized that justice can only be realized if all people are treated equally before the law. In the context of professional ethics, Rawls' theory requires law enforcement officers to carry out their duties without discrimination, free from conflicts of interest, and to uphold the principle of impartiality. Law enforcement must ensure that the judicial process is fair, transparent, and morally accountable to the public (Carr, 2024; Robinson, 2025).

Through Lon Fuller, it also makes an important contribution to understanding professional ethics. Fuller introduces the concept of *Internal Morality of Law*, which encompasses eight legal moral principles, including consistency of rules, transparency, and accountability. According to him, the law can only function properly if the apparatus that implements it complies with these moral principles. Thus, a law enforcement officer is not only responsible for written rules, but also for the internal morality that is the foundation of the law's enforceability. Violation of the internal morality of the law is tantamount to undermining the ethical structure of the legal system itself (Sutch, 2019; Dufner, 2022).

From the perspective of classical moral philosophy, professional ethics is also concerned with the concept of Virtue, such as wisdom, moral courage, and justice. A law enforcement officer with a virtuous character will be able to make the right decision even in difficult situations. Aristotle described virtue not just as an action, but as a moral habit formed through constant practice. In the legal profession, moral character, including integrity, impartiality, and honesty, is a virtue that every officer must possess to maintain the authority of the law (Claassen, 2019; Kuch, 2024).

The ethics of the law enforcement profession also cannot be separated from the principle of **moral accountability**. In carrying out their duties, law enforcement officers are not only responsible to their superiors and the internal regulations of their institutions, but also to the community that entrusts them with security and justice. When a law enforcer acts unethically, the impact is not only felt by the immediate victim but also undermines the legitimacy of the legal system as a whole. Therefore, moral accountability is a key pillar in the formation of dignified professional behavior.

Thus, the ethics of the law enforcement profession from the perspective of moral philosophy is the foundation that connects the law with human values. This ethics is not just a technical rule, but a form of moral obligation that requires law enforcement to act based on

universal principles, justice, virtue, and the internal morality of the law. A philosophical understanding of professional ethics provides a strong foundation for law enforcement to carry out their duties with dignity, fairness, and integrity.

Analysis of Law Enforcement Ethics Violations in Viral Cases in Indonesia

Various cases of ethical violations that have gone viral in recent years have created an opportunity for philosophical analysis of the moral crisis within the Indonesian law enforcement system. These cases are not just sporadic incidents, but reflect structural problems related to the weak internalization of moral values and professional ethical principles. In the context of legal philosophy, this phenomenon reveals a dissonance between morality, obligations, and the enforcement of the law. To understand the depth, several viral cases can be used as reflective examples in assessing how the integrity of law enforcement operates in the real world.

The most prominent case is Brigadier J's Assassination Plot (2022), which is of national and international concern. Al Jazeera reported how a high-ranking police officer allegedly abused his position to manipulate the investigation process and obscure legal facts. This case illustrates a serious violation of Kantian moral principles, particularly the principle of the categorical imperative, as the law apparatus renders the law an instrument of personal interest rather than a universal moral obligation (Sunaryo and Nur, 2022; Sauni et al., 2024).

From John Rawls' perspective, this action constitutes a form of procedural injustice because the legal process is not conducted in a neutral, honest, or transparent manner. Rawls emphasized the importance of fairness as a condition of legal legitimacy, and this case shows how violations of fairness can trigger the erosion of public trust at large (Asa'ari et al., 2023; RIDWAN et al., 2022).

In addition to the police, the case of **Prosecutor Pinangki (2020–2021)** is also a clear example of violations of professional ethics in the Prosecutor's Office. CNN Indonesia reported that the prosecutor received bribes related to case management and abuse of office. This case reflects a violation of the internal morality of the law, as described by **Lon Fuller**, which requires law enforcement to implement the rules consistently, honestly, and with integrity. When law enforcement actually commits corrupt acts, the law loses the moral value on which it is based (Aurelia, van Prooijen and Van Lange, 2025).

An ethical crisis is also evident in the case of **KPK OTT against a judge in 2023**, as reported by Kompas. The judge allegedly accepted bribes to influence the verdict of the case he was handling. From the perspective of Aristotle's moral philosophy, such actions reflect the absence of virtues such as justice, wisdom, and integrity that should be inherent in the office of a judge. Without a virtuous character, a judge is incapable of carrying out his role as a guardian of justice (FAHRUDIN et al., 2023).

The viral cases show the same pattern: law enforcement violates moral obligations, deviates from the principle of fairness, and ignores the internal morality of the law. This phenomenon can be understood as a failure to establish a robust ethical culture within law enforcement agencies. When the morality of the apparatus collapses, what collapses is not only the credibility of the individual but the legitimacy of the justice system as a whole.

Through philosophical analysis, it can be concluded that these viral cases reflect systemic professional ethical issues. The practice of abusing authority, bribery, and manipulating legal processes reveals a lack of adequate internal supervision and inadequate professional ethics education within legal institutions. Using the frameworks of Kant, Rawls, and Fuller, these cases demonstrate how violations of morality can erode the substance of justice and precipitate a crisis of public trust in the law.

The Moral Crisis of Law Enforcement and Its Impact on the Legitimacy of the Legal System

The moral crisis within law enforcement has a profound impact on the overall legitimacy of the legal system. In legal philosophy, legitimacy comes not only from compliance with legal procedures, but also from the moral integrity of the actors who carry them out. When law enforcement abuses its authority, manipulates legal processes, or accepts bribes, it undermines the fundamental assumption that law enforcement acts in the pursuit of truth and justice. Without a moral foundation, the law becomes a mere formal tool, losing its ethical force.

This moral crisis also creates a significant disparity between ideal law and actual law. Theoretically, laws are designed to promote the values of justice, certainty, and order. However, in practice, ethical violations by law enforcement show that laws can be twisted for personal gain. This inconsistency is dangerous because it erodes the public's confidence in the law's ability to protect them. In John Rawls's perspective, a legal system cannot be considered fair if those who administer it fail to maintain fairness in both the process and the outcome.

In addition to weakening public trust, the moral crisis of the law apparatus has an impact on weakening **the moral authority of the state**. The state derives its authority not only from a formal set of rules and powers, but from the moral principles inherent in the actions of its officials. When the law apparatus acts corruptly, the state authority is seen not as a protector of the people's interests, but as a fragile and easily abused entity. In Immanuel Kant's view, the state can maintain moral authority only if the law is enforced based on universal moral obligations and is not tainted by private interests.

The moral crisis of the law apparatus also interferes with the law's function as an instrument for conflict resolution. If the public views the apparatus as a non-neutral actor, then every legal decision will always be suspected of having specific interests. This condition gives rise to the phenomenon of **mistrust**, a deeply ingrained structural distrust that pervades people's social experiences. This distrust can ultimately hinder efforts to resolve conflicts through legal channels, as people often prefer to seek alternative means that are considered more "fair" according to their own judgment.

In the context of Lon Fuller's internal morality of the law, the moral crisis of the law apparatus is a direct threat to the enactment of the law itself. Laws run by immoral actors have the potential to lose the coherence, transparency, and integrity of three important aspects of the internal morality of law. Fuller asserts that law can only function if it is run by

actors who uphold moral principles. When the authorities violate these principles, the law ceases to have ethical force and loses its nature as a normative guide.

Additionally, the moral crisis in law enforcement has implications for the increased potential for abuse of power. Unobjective examinations, fabricated investigations, and verdicts influenced by bribery are indicators that the rule of law is losing its moral limits. From the perspective of political philosophy, this condition marks the beginning of the emergence of structural injustice, a situation in which the legal system no longer favors the principle of justice, but rather the interests of certain groups. Structural injustice is more dangerous than individual injustice because it undermines the legal system systemically.

Ultimately, the moral crisis in law enforcement has a lasting impact that is challenging to rectify, specifically, the erosion of public trust in legal institutions. Without public trust, the law no longer has social legitimacy even though it remains formally valid. Social legitimacy is a crucial element in modern legal philosophy, as laws that society does not trust will lose their effectiveness. Therefore, the moral crisis of the law apparatus is not only a personal problem, but a threat to the sustainability of the legal and justice system in Indonesia.

Philosophical Recommendations for Strengthening the Ethics of the Law Enforcement Profession

Improving the ethics of the law enforcement profession requires a philosophical approach that emphasizes not only formal rules but also the formation of moral character. One of the main recommendations is to rebuild the moral consciousness of the apparatus through a Kantian deontological approach. In Kant's perspective, moral action must be driven by *universal duties* and principles, not mere instrumental obedience. Therefore, ethics education and training in legal institutions should emphasize the internalization of values related to moral obligations, such as honesty, impartiality, and respect for human dignity. This approach can enhance the authorities' ability to act correctly, even in situations that involve pressure or conflicts of interest.

In addition, John Rawls's concept of justice as fairness offers a framework for developing a more procedurally and substantively just legal system. Law enforcement must understand that justice, encompassing the investigation, prosecution, and termination of cases, is an absolute requirement for legal legitimacy. Structural reforms, such as transparency of the judicial process, public oversight, and stricter enforcement of the code of ethics, are important steps in realizing the principle of fairness. Rawls emphasized that procedural injustice can profoundly damage social structures, so professional ethics reform must begin with process improvement.

Lon Fuller's thinking on the internal morality of law is also a relevant philosophical foundation for strengthening professional ethics. Fuller emphasized that the law can only function effectively if it is run by actors who uphold internal morality principles such as consistency, openness, and integrity. In this context, strengthening internal supervision, ethical performance evaluation, and the application of strict sanctions against moral violations are

urgently needed. Law enforcement agencies must establish precise moral evaluation mechanisms so that violations are not only seen as administrative errors, but as a threat to the functioning of the law itself.

In addition to strengthening the normative framework, it is also crucial to cultivate a culture of virtue ethics within the law enforcement community. Virtue ethics emphasizes the development of moral character, including wisdom, moral courage, and integrity. Law enforcement officers need to be trained to develop strong character, enabling them to make informed decisions, not just legal ones. Case-based ethical education, moral discussion, and character building can strengthen this dimension of virtue. When the moral character of the apparatus is built, the potential for ethical violations can be significantly reduced.

In addition to moral reform, structural reform is also an urgent need. Internal and external oversight systems must be strengthened with a more objective, transparent, and independent approach. The use of digital technology in case surveillance, public information disclosure, and civil society involvement can be a crucial means to prevent the abuse of authority. Transparency is not just an administrative tool, but a moral mechanism that helps ensure that law enforcement officers carry out their duties in accordance with the principles of professional ethics.

Ultimately, strengthening the ethics of the law enforcement profession should be viewed as a comprehensive effort that encompasses individual, institutional, and societal reforms. Hard reform will not succeed without a change in the mindset of law enforcement. By integrating the thought of Kant, Rawls, Fuller, and the theory of virtue, the legal system can reestablish its moral legitimacy. Strengthening professional ethics is not only important for preventing violations, but also for restoring public trust in the law as an instrument of justice. Thus, ethical reform is not just a professional demand, but a foundation for the upholding of dignified justice in Indonesia.

Table 1. Philosophical Recommendations for Strengthening the Ethics of the Law Enforcement Profession

Philosophical Approach	Key Principles	Ethical Recommendations for Law Enforcement	Practical Implications in Legal Institutions
Deontology (Immanuel Kant)	<i>Duty</i> , moral obligation, universal principle	Instilling the value of moral obligation: honesty, objectivity, impartiality	Strengthening morality-based ethics training; Periodic integrity test mechanism
Justice Theory (John Rawls)	Fairness, equality, procedural justice	Ensure a transparent, non-discriminatory and conflict-free legal process	Reform of the judicial process; Increased transparency of investigations and trials
The Internal Morality of Law (Lon L. Fuller)	Consistency of rules, integrity, and openness	Carrying out the law according to internal moral principles, such as consistency and openness	Strengthening internal supervision, ethical audits, and enforcement of strict sanctions

Virtue Ethics – Aristotle	Moral character: wisdom, integrity, moral courage	Cultivate the moral character of the apparatus through routine coaching and institutional example	Character development programs; promotion based on a moral track record, not just technical
Philosophy of Moral Responsibility	Accountability to the public	Law enforcement must understand that its mistakes have far-reaching social impacts.	Public reporting, <i>public accountability</i> mechanisms and community engagement
Modern Transparency Ethics	Openness, public participation	Encourage a publicly supervisable justice system to prevent irregularities.	Digital application for case supervision; openness of the verdict and the flow of the investigation

Source: Processed by the Author, 2025

CONCLUSION

The ethics of the law enforcement profession are the moral foundation that determines the success of the legal system in carrying out the function of justice. Through the approach of legal philosophy, it can be understood that the enforcement of the law with dignity cannot be separated from the morality of the individual who implements the law. Law is not just a regulatory instrument, but a value system that can only function if it is run by actors who understand and uphold integrity. Therefore, professional ethics must be seen as the main element in ensuring that the law remains on the path of justice.

The various viral cases that have occurred in Indonesia in recent years indicate a severe moral crisis within the law enforcement community. Abuses such as case engineering, bribery, and abuse of authority demonstrate that personal interests and power often take precedence over ethical values. From the perspective of legal philosophy, such actions are contrary to Kant's moral principles, Rawls's concept of fairness, and Fuller's internal morality of law. This phenomenon reveals an inequality between ideal law and legal practice in the field, thereby affecting the moral legitimacy of the judicial system.

The moral crisis in law enforcement not only affects individuals but also undermines public trust in legal institutions. Public trust is a crucial component of legal legitimacy, as the law is only effective if the public accepts it as an instrument of justice. When the authorities act unethically, the public begins to doubt the objectivity, neutrality, and integrity of the legal system. This distrust ultimately undermines the law's function as a means of resolving conflicts and can lead to disobedience and social resistance.

Through philosophical analysis, recommendations for improvement can be directed at re-establishing the moral consciousness of the legal apparatus through Kant's approach to deontology, Rawls's concept of justice, and Fuller's internal morality of law. More intensive professional ethics education, strengthening internal supervision, transparency of the legal process, and fostering moral character are important steps in improving the quality of ethics. Structural reforms must also be implemented so that the implementation of the law does not depend solely on individuals but is supported by a fair, transparent, and accountable system.

Overall, this article emphasizes that professional ethics are not only complementary to the law enforcement process but are a fundamental prerequisite for the establishment of justice. The integrity of the legal apparatus is the primary determinant of whether the legal system operates in the public interest or serves as a tool for the abuse of power. By strengthening professional ethics through philosophical approaches and institutional reforms, Indonesia's legal system can rebuild its moral legitimacy and create fair, transparent, and dignified law enforcement.

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