

The Role of the Police in Addressing Sexual Violence Against Children in Bulukumba Regency

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: March 11, 2026

Revised: October 23, 2026

Accepted: October 26, 2026

DOI

<https://doi.org/10.52970/grdis.v6i4.2167>

ABSTRACT

This study aims to: (1) examine and analyze the functions of the police in handling sexual violence against minors in Bulukumba Regency; and (2) identify the factors influencing the implementation of police functions in addressing sexual violence against minors in the same region. This research employs an empirical legal approach, which focuses on examining legal issues occurring in society and analyzing them in relation to applicable laws and regulations. The study emphasizes how law enforcement institutions perform their duties in responding to cases of sexual violence against children within the social and legal context of the community. The results indicate that the police functions in handling cases of sexual violence against children in Bulukumba Regency have been carried out through three main stages: preventive measures, repressive measures, and rehabilitative measures. Preventive efforts include public education and legal awareness programs aimed at preventing sexual violence against children. Repressive actions involve investigation and law enforcement processes against perpetrators in accordance with existing legal provisions. Meanwhile, rehabilitative efforts are conducted through coordination with child protection institutions and related agencies to support the recovery and protection of victims. However, the implementation of these functions has not yet been optimal due to several constraints in the handling process. The factors affecting the effectiveness of police functions include legal factors, such as regulations that are not fully implementable; law enforcement factors, including limited personnel and the competence of investigators in the Women and Children Protection Unit (PPA); infrastructure factors, particularly the lack of child-friendly facilities; and community factors, such as low public awareness and reluctance to report cases due to social stigma. Therefore, it is recommended that the Bulukumba Resort Police enhance the capacity and competence of investigators through specialized training on child protection and gender sensitivity, while strengthening cross-sector collaboration with relevant institutions.

Keywords: Police Function, Sexual Violence, Minors, Law Enforcement.

I. Introduction

Data reported by institutions such as the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) and the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA) show that incidents of sexual violence against minors remain significant and, in many instances, demonstrate an increasing trend with diverse patterns and modes of perpetration. These cases frequently involve perpetrators who are closely connected to the victims, including family members, neighbors, teachers, or other individuals who are expected to serve as protectors. The prevalence of such cases reflects complex social dynamics in which trust relationships may

be exploited to facilitate abuse. Sexual violence against children produces multidimensional consequences. Victims often suffer severe psychological trauma, developmental disorders, and health complications. Families may experience social stigma, emotional distress, and economic burdens, while communities may face declining trust in social institutions and weakened systems of child protection. These consequences underscore the urgency of strengthening legal enforcement and preventive mechanisms aimed at safeguarding children from sexual exploitation.

Beyond the legal perspective, the protection of children from sexual violence is also deeply rooted in moral and religious values. In Islamic teachings, children are regarded as a trust (amanah) from Allah SWT that must be nurtured, protected, and respected. The Qur'an strongly condemns acts that lead to moral degradation and harm to human dignity, including sexual misconduct. The verse "And do not approach zina; indeed, it is an abomination and an evil way" emphasizes the prohibition of actions that threaten the moral and social order of society. Although the verse directly addresses adultery, many Islamic scholars interpret it more broadly as a warning against behaviors that damage the physical and psychological integrity of individuals, particularly vulnerable groups such as children. From this perspective, sexual violence against minors represents a grave injustice that violates both religious principles and societal ethics, reinforcing the obligation of institutions and communities to prevent and address such crimes.

Despite the existence of legal frameworks and moral norms emphasizing child protection, the handling of sexual violence cases against minors still encounters numerous obstacles. One significant challenge arises from sociocultural perceptions that consider family-related issues as private matters, thereby discouraging victims or their families from reporting incidents of abuse. Feelings of shame, fear of social stigma, and pressure from perpetrators or community members often silence victims and prevent cases from reaching law enforcement authorities. In addition, structural challenges within law enforcement institutions may also hinder effective case handling. Limited human resources, particularly investigators with specialized expertise in gender-based violence and child protection, can constrain investigative capacity. Furthermore, inadequate facilities, including the absence of child-friendly interview rooms or victim support services, may complicate efforts to provide trauma-informed responses to victims. These structural and cultural factors collectively contribute to underreporting and may impede the delivery of justice and protection for child victims.

Within the law enforcement system, the Indonesian National Police play a central role in addressing crimes against children. According to Law Number 2 of 2002 concerning the Indonesian National Police, the institution is mandated to maintain public security and order, enforce the law, and provide protection and services to the community. In cases of sexual violence against children, the police are expected to perform not only repressive functions through investigation and prosecution but also preventive and protective roles. Preventive efforts may include community education, legal awareness campaigns, and early detection of potential abuse. Repressive actions involve criminal investigations and the prosecution of perpetrators, while protective functions require coordination with social institutions, medical professionals, and child protection agencies to ensure victim recovery and safety. These multidimensional responsibilities require a sensitive and child-centered approach, particularly through specialized units such as the Women and Children Protection Unit (PPA), which are designed to handle cases involving vulnerable groups.

At the regional level, the phenomenon of sexual violence against children is also evident in Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi Province. Local media reports and law enforcement records indicate that several cases have occurred in recent years, reflecting the persistence of child protection challenges within the region. For instance, in 2022 a case involving a 13-year-old girl who became a victim of sexual violence in the Gantarang District generated significant public concern. The victim, who was still a junior high school student, reportedly experienced severe psychological trauma as a result of the incident. Community members demanded that law enforcement authorities conduct a thorough investigation and impose strict legal sanctions against the perpetrator. Similarly, in 2024 another case involving sexual abuse of a minor by a 59-year-old man identified as Abd. Majid bin Baco drew widespread attention. The perpetrator was prosecuted and convicted by the Bulukumba District Court following an investigation conducted by the Women and

Children Protection Unit of the Bulukumba Police Resort. These cases highlight not only the vulnerability of children but also the importance of effective law enforcement responses to protect victims and ensure justice.

Although several studies have discussed legal protection for child victims and the enforcement of sexual violence laws in Indonesia, empirical examinations of how police institutions perform their functional roles at the regional level remain relatively limited. Many existing studies focus primarily on normative legal analysis rather than exploring the operational dynamics of law enforcement practices in specific local contexts. Consequently, there is still a need for empirical research that examines how preventive, repressive, and rehabilitative functions of the police are implemented in handling cases of sexual violence against children, particularly within regions that possess unique sociocultural characteristics. Bulukumba Regency, with its strong traditions of kinship and local cultural values, provides an important setting for understanding how cultural norms may both support and hinder law enforcement processes in cases involving child victims.

Understanding the actual functioning of the police in addressing sexual violence against children is essential not only for evaluating the effectiveness of existing legal frameworks but also for identifying institutional and social factors that influence law enforcement performance. Such analysis may contribute to the development of more responsive policing strategies, improved inter-institutional coordination, and stronger mechanisms for victim protection. From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the discourse in criminal law and criminology by examining the interaction between legal institutions, sociocultural factors, and the protection of vulnerable groups. From a practical standpoint, the findings may provide policy recommendations aimed at strengthening law enforcement mechanisms and improving child protection systems at the regional level. Based on these considerations, this study seeks to examine the role and functions of the police in handling cases of sexual violence against minors in Bulukumba Regency and to identify the factors that influence the effectiveness of these functions. Specifically, the research aims to analyze how preventive, repressive, and protective functions of the police are implemented in addressing sexual violence against children and to explore the legal, institutional, infrastructural, and societal factors that affect the performance of law enforcement institutions in protecting child victims. Through this analysis, the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of law enforcement in cases involving sexual violence against minors and to contribute to strengthening child protection mechanisms within the Indonesian legal system.

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Legal Function Theory

In legal scholarship, the function of law is not merely understood as a set of norms regulating human behavior but also as a social mechanism aimed at creating order, justice, and legal certainty. Satjipto Rahardjo explains that law functions to maintain social order and balance various interests within society; therefore, law should not be viewed merely as a normative text but also as a means to realize justice embedded in social realities (Rahardjo, 2000). This perspective emphasizes that law has a strong social dimension because its existence aims to regulate relationships between individuals while simultaneously protecting collective interests. The systemic approach to law proposed by Friedman strengthens this understanding by explaining that the effectiveness of law is determined by the interaction between three main elements: legal structure, legal substance, and legal culture (Friedman, 1975). Legal structure refers to law enforcement institutions such as the police, prosecutors, and courts; legal substance relates to laws and regulations governing social behavior; and legal culture refers to the level of legal awareness and compliance within society. These three elements demonstrate that the successful functioning of law does not depend solely on the quality of regulations but also on the capacity of law enforcement institutions and the legal awareness of the community.

Similarly, Kusumaatmadja views law as a tool of social engineering, meaning that law can be used as an instrument to transform social behavior through regulation and consistent law enforcement. In the context

of child protection, the function of law is not limited to repressive measures through sanctions imposed on perpetrators but also includes preventive and curative dimensions aimed at preventing crimes and restoring victims. Thus, the function of law in child protection should be viewed as a comprehensive protection system involving the state, society, and law enforcement institutions.

2.2. Law Enforcement Theory

Law enforcement refers to the process of implementing legal norms by law enforcement authorities to ensure that the law functions effectively in society. Dellyana (1988) explains that law enforcement is an effort to ensure that legal rules are obeyed by individuals and groups so that social order and justice can be achieved. In practice, law enforcement involves various institutions such as the police, prosecutors, and courts that are responsible for addressing legal violations based on principles of justice, legal certainty, and social benefit. Soerjono Soekanto emphasizes that law enforcement essentially involves harmonizing the values reflected in legal norms with societal behavior to maintain social harmony (Soekanto, 1983). This view indicates that the effectiveness of law enforcement depends not only on the existence of legal regulations but also on the ability of law enforcement officers to translate these norms into practical actions within society.

In criminal law theory, Moeljatno explains that law enforcement includes three main elements: determining prohibited acts, determining the parties who can be subject to criminal sanctions, and determining the procedures through which such sanctions are implemented (Moeljatno, 1983). This perspective demonstrates that the criminal justice system operates through a complex structure ranging from the formulation of norms to the enforcement of sanctions. Goldstein further categorizes criminal law enforcement into three levels: total enforcement, full enforcement, and actual enforcement (Pahlevi, 2016). Total enforcement represents the ideal scope of law enforcement as defined by substantive criminal law. However, in practice, such enforcement is limited by procedural regulations, institutional constraints, and social realities. Therefore, law enforcement that occurs in practice is more accurately described as actual enforcement, which reflects realistic law enforcement considering limitations in resources, personnel, and institutional capacity. Soekanto also identifies five key factors influencing the effectiveness of law enforcement: the legal system itself, law enforcement officers, facilities and infrastructure, societal conditions, and cultural factors (Soekanto, 1983). This framework provides an analytical basis for understanding why law enforcement in cases of sexual violence against children often faces structural and cultural challenges.

2.3. Legal Protection Theory

Legal protection represents a fundamental concept within the rule of law, aiming to ensure justice, security, and legal certainty for citizens. Hadjon (1987) defines legal protection as all forms of protection provided to legal subjects through legal mechanisms, both preventive and repressive. Preventive legal protection allows individuals to prevent potential legal violations, whereas repressive protection functions to resolve disputes after violations occur. The concept of legal protection is closely linked to the principle of the rule of law (*rechtsstaat*), which emphasizes recognition and protection of human rights. In this context, the state has an obligation to ensure legal protection for all citizens, including vulnerable groups such as children (Hadjon, 1987). This protection must not only be established through legal regulations but must also be implemented through effective law enforcement practices.

Rahardjo (2003) further argues that legal protection aims to safeguard human rights that have been violated by others and to ensure that individuals can enjoy the rights guaranteed by law. From this perspective, law should function as a means of social protection capable of providing security and justice to society. Similarly, Muchsin (2003) explains that legal protection is an effort by the government to guarantee legal certainty through responsive regulations, professional law enforcement, and effective dispute resolution mechanisms. In cases of sexual violence against children, legal protection theory becomes particularly relevant because children are vulnerable legal subjects who are often unable to protect themselves. Legal

protection therefore encompasses preventive efforts, strict law enforcement against perpetrators, and victim recovery measures. In this regard, the role of law enforcement institutions, particularly the police, becomes crucial in ensuring that legal protection for children is effectively realized.

2.4. Sexual Violence Against Children

Sexual violence against children is a serious crime that produces multidimensional impacts on victims. Wahid and Irfan (2007) explain that sexual violence against children occurs when a child is involved in sexual activities that they do not fully understand or cannot consent to. Such acts may include sexual exploitation in prostitution or pornography, forcing children to observe sexual activities, exposure to sexual organs, sexual stimulation, molestation, rape, incest, and sodomy. Endah (2007) adds that sexual violence refers to sexual behavior conveyed through physical or non-physical actions directed at an individual's sexual body parts or sexuality, which may cause discomfort, humiliation, psychological harm, and threats to the victim's health and safety. Simandjuntak (1981) also notes that sexual violence against children often involves perpetrators who are older and possess authority or power over the victims.

From a criminological perspective, sexual violence against children is a complex social phenomenon. Probosiwi and Bahransyaf (2015) explain that the concept of child abuse has long been recognized in medical and social studies and later became a major concern in legal and policy frameworks regarding child protection. Such acts not only violate legal norms but also cause severe psychological and developmental harm to victims. Research also indicates that sexual violence against children frequently occurs within the victim's immediate social environment, including family members or individuals close to the child (Tuliah, 2018). This pattern suggests that sexual violence is influenced not only by individual factors but also by broader social and cultural conditions that may enable such crimes to occur.

2.5. The Role of the Police in Handling Sexual Violence Against Children

Within the criminal justice system, the police play a strategic role in addressing crimes, including sexual violence against children. According to Law Number 2 of 2002 concerning the Indonesian National Police, the police are responsible for maintaining public order and security and enforcing the law. In the context of sexual violence cases, the police function not only as law enforcement officers but also as protectors of victims and agents of crime prevention (Alfian, 2020). In addition to performing law enforcement functions, the police also possess discretionary authority as regulated in Article 18 of Law Number 2 of 2002. This authority allows police officers to take actions based on professional judgment in urgent situations for the public interest (Kustiwinarsih et al., 2019). However, in cases involving sexual violence against children, such discretion must be exercised cautiously due to the vulnerable status of child victims.

From a criminological standpoint, understanding criminal motives and patterns is essential for effective law enforcement. Lombroso and Bonger emphasize that criminology aims to study the causes of crime, criminal behavior, and societal responses to criminal acts (Hajrin, 2011). In cases of sexual violence against children, criminological analysis can assist law enforcement authorities in understanding the motives of perpetrators and developing effective prevention strategies. Despite the existence of various regulations aimed at protecting children from sexual violence, studies indicate that law enforcement in such cases still faces significant challenges. These challenges include limited institutional resources, insufficient coordination between agencies, and low levels of public awareness in reporting cases of sexual violence (Azis et al., 2023; Konoras, 2023). These conditions indicate a gap between the availability of legal frameworks and the effectiveness of law enforcement practices.

III. Research Method

3.1. Research Design

This study employed an empirical legal research design aimed at examining legal phenomena occurring within society and analyzing them in relation to applicable legal frameworks and regulations. Empirical legal research focuses on understanding how legal norms operate in practice and how law enforcement institutions implement legal provisions in real-life situations. In this context, the study investigated the implementation of police functions in handling cases of sexual violence against minors in Bulukumba Regency. The research emphasizes the interaction between legal norms and institutional practices by examining how law enforcement officers perform preventive, repressive, and protective roles in addressing such crimes. This approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of both the normative legal framework and its practical implementation within law enforcement institutions. The research was conducted within the jurisdiction of the Bulukumba Resort Police (Polres Bulukumba), located in South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. The research process was designed to be carried out over a period of approximately one to three months, covering the stages of initial planning, field data collection, and the preparation of the final research report.

3.2. Population and Participants

The population of this study consisted of all personnel within the Bulukumba Resort Police. However, due to the specific focus of the research on the handling of sexual violence cases involving minors, the study concentrated on investigators who directly handle criminal investigations. The sampling technique applied in this study was saturated sampling, in which all members of the targeted population meeting the research criteria were included as research participants. In this case, the sample consisted of five investigators from the Special Criminal Investigation Unit within the Criminal Investigation Division (Satreskrim) of the Bulukumba Resort Police. These participants were selected because of their direct involvement in investigating cases of sexual violence against children and their practical knowledge regarding law enforcement procedures related to such cases.

3.3. Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through both library research and field research to ensure comprehensive coverage of theoretical and empirical information. Library research was conducted to obtain theoretical and legal foundations related to the study topic. This process involved reviewing books, academic literature, legal documents, statutory regulations, and other scholarly sources relevant to child protection, law enforcement, and sexual violence. The purpose of this stage was to establish a conceptual framework and provide a normative basis for analyzing the empirical findings. Field research was conducted directly at the Bulukumba Resort Police in order to gather empirical data regarding the implementation of police functions in handling cases of sexual violence against children. Several techniques were used in this stage, including interviews, observation, and document analysis.

Interviews were conducted with selected informants using a semi-structured interview guide designed according to the research objectives. The interviews were conducted in a conducive and non-pressured environment to allow informants to express their experiences and perspectives openly and honestly. This approach enabled the researcher to obtain in-depth insights into investigative procedures, institutional challenges, and the practical implementation of legal protection mechanisms for victims. Observation was also employed to obtain a direct understanding of how police officers perform their roles in handling sexual violence cases involving children. Through observation, the researcher was able to examine the working procedures of law enforcement officers, particularly those within the Women and Children Protection Unit (PPA) under the Criminal Investigation Division of the Bulukumba Resort Police. This method

allowed the researcher to observe the institutional environment, investigative processes, and coordination mechanisms within the police unit responsible for handling such cases.

In addition, document analysis was conducted to complement the information obtained from interviews and observations. This technique involved examining relevant documents, including official reports, institutional records, legal regulations, and other written or digital materials related to the handling of sexual violence cases against children. The documents analyzed consisted of both official and unofficial sources, including statutory regulations, institutional documents from the police, and related policy reports. Document analysis served as an important tool for triangulating data and strengthening the validity of the research findings.

3.4. Instruments and Measures

The primary research instruments used in this study consisted of interview guidelines, observation protocols, and document analysis frameworks. The interview guide was developed based on the research objectives and theoretical framework, focusing on key aspects such as police preventive actions, investigative procedures, victim protection mechanisms, and institutional coordination in handling cases of sexual violence against minors. Observation protocols were designed to record relevant activities and procedures related to police work practices in the investigation and handling of cases. Meanwhile, document analysis frameworks were used to systematically review legal and institutional documents relevant to the research topic.

3.5. Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected in this study were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis. This analytical approach involves organizing, interpreting, and synthesizing empirical findings in relation to the theoretical framework used in the study. The analysis process was conducted by categorizing the data obtained from interviews, observations, and document analysis into relevant themes related to the functions of the police in handling sexual violence cases involving children. The qualitative analysis focused on identifying patterns, relationships, and institutional dynamics that influence the effectiveness of police functions in the context of law enforcement and victim protection. The findings were then interpreted using the theoretical perspectives adopted in this research, including legal function theory, law enforcement theory, and legal protection theory. The results of the analysis were subsequently presented in descriptive form to provide a comprehensive understanding of the empirical realities of law enforcement practices in Bulukumba Regency.

3.6. Trustworthiness and Data Validation

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings, this study applied data triangulation techniques. Triangulation was conducted by comparing and integrating information obtained from multiple data sources, including interviews, observations, and document analysis. This approach allowed the researcher to verify the consistency of the data and minimize potential bias. In addition, the researcher ensured that the information obtained from informants accurately reflected the empirical conditions within the institution studied. Cross-checking between different sources of data enabled the researcher to strengthen the reliability and validity of the findings. Through this process, the research aimed to provide an accurate and comprehensive representation of the police functions in handling cases of sexual violence against children.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process. Informants participated voluntarily and were informed about the objectives and scope of the research before the

interviews were conducted. Confidentiality of sensitive information, particularly related to ongoing cases and personal identities, was strictly maintained. The research was conducted in accordance with ethical standards for social and legal research to ensure that the data collection process did not interfere with institutional procedures or compromise the rights of the participants.

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1. Analysis Result

The findings of this study reveal that the police in Bulukumba Regency have carried out their institutional functions in handling cases of sexual violence against minors through several operational mechanisms, including preventive actions, repressive law enforcement, victim protection measures, and cross-sectoral coordination. Within the Indonesian criminal justice system, the police function as the primary law enforcement institution responsible for maintaining public order, enforcing the law, and providing protection and services to the community as stipulated in Law Number 2 of 2002 concerning the Indonesian National Police. In the context of sexual violence cases involving children, this role extends beyond investigative procedures to include victim protection and institutional collaboration with other agencies. The empirical findings indicate that the Women and Children Protection Unit (PPA) of the Bulukumba Resort Police has implemented investigative procedures starting from receiving public reports, verifying initial information, conducting preliminary investigations, and collecting evidence before proceeding to formal investigations in accordance with Article 184 of the Indonesian Criminal Procedure Code. This process includes examining witnesses, victims, and suspects as part of the evidentiary process. Interviews with investigators confirmed that these procedures are conducted with attention to victim safety and psychological conditions (Interview with Briptu Ahmad Khaerul Imam, Assistant Investigator of the PPA Unit, Tuesday 13:15 WITA).

Empirical data collected from institutional records demonstrate the dynamics of case handling between 2022 and 2025. The number of reported cases and the stages of legal processing illustrate the operational capacity of the police in dealing with sexual violence cases involving children.

Table 1. Handling of Sexual Violence Cases Against Children at Bulukumba Police Resort (2022–2025)

Year	Police Reports (LP)	Investigation (Lidik)	Formal Investigation (Sidik)	P21 (Completed Case File)	Transferred to Prosecutor
2022	4	3	1	0	0
2023	15	7	2	2	2
2024	33	13	7	7	0
2025	18	17	4	2	1

The data show a gradual increase in the number of reported cases, particularly between 2023 and 2024. In 2022, only four cases were reported, with most cases remaining at the preliminary investigation stage. By 2023, reports increased to fifteen cases, two of which successfully reached the P21 stage and were transferred to the prosecutor's office. The most significant increase occurred in 2024 with thirty-three reported cases, indicating growing public awareness and possibly improved reporting mechanisms. Seven cases reached the P21 stage during this period, reflecting stronger investigative performance. However, no cases were transferred to the prosecutor's office during that year, suggesting administrative or procedural delays. In 2025, eighteen reports were recorded, with seventeen cases undergoing preliminary investigation, four cases entering formal investigation, and one case successfully transferred to the prosecution stage.

In addition to the quantitative data, qualitative findings from interviews and observations indicate that police functions in handling sexual violence cases against children operate through several dimensions. Preventive efforts are carried out through legal education and community outreach activities, particularly by the Community Development Unit (Binmas) of the Bulukumba Police. These activities involve legal awareness campaigns in schools and community forums aimed at educating parents, teachers, and students about the

risks of sexual violence and the importance of reporting incidents. However, interviews with the Head of Criminal Investigation Unit, Iptu Muhammad Ali (Tuesday 14:03 WITA), revealed that preventive efforts remain limited due to shortages in personnel, facilities, and uneven legal awareness among rural communities.

Repressive law enforcement functions are primarily handled by the PPA Unit under the Criminal Investigation Division. The investigation process includes receiving reports, conducting initial inquiries, collecting evidence, and coordinating with external institutions such as the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Agency (DP3A), the Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK), hospitals, and psychologists to support the investigative process and provide medical and psychological assistance to victims. Interviews with Ipd Rosmina, Head of the PPA Unit (Tuesday 13:15 WITA), indicate that standard operating procedures exist for handling cases involving child victims and emphasize a child-friendly approach during investigations. However, limitations remain, including the shortage of trained investigators and the lack of child-friendly interrogation facilities.

Another important finding concerns the protective role of the police in assisting victims throughout the legal process. The PPA Unit provides protection by ensuring that victims are accompanied during investigations, preventing intimidation from perpetrators, and facilitating access to psychological counseling and social rehabilitation services. Nevertheless, long-term victim assistance remains limited because police involvement typically ends after the investigation stage, leaving further support largely dependent on external institutions such as DP3A or civil society organizations. Additionally, the absence of police-managed safe houses or shelters represents a significant gap in the protection system for vulnerable victims. Coordination with other institutions constitutes another important aspect of police work. According to interviews with Brigpol Gunawan Nasram (Assistant Investigator, Tuesday 13:15 WITA), the Bulukumba Police collaborate with multiple stakeholders, including the Social Affairs Office, DP3A, the Integrated Service Center for Women and Children Empowerment (P2TP2A), and various non-governmental organizations focusing on child protection. These collaborations are essential because sexual violence cases involve complex legal, psychological, and social dimensions that cannot be addressed by law enforcement alone. However, informants also acknowledged that coordination among institutions often remains sectoral rather than integrated, which sometimes delays victim recovery and legal processes.

The findings further indicate that several structural and cultural factors influence the effectiveness of police functions. Internal challenges include limited human resources, insufficient investigative facilities, and heavy workloads among investigators. External challenges include strong patriarchal cultural norms and social stigma that discourage victims or families from reporting cases. Interviews with Brigpol Andi Citra Trisnarningsih Syahril (Assistant Investigator, Tuesday 14:30 WITA) revealed that many families prefer to conceal incidents of sexual violence to avoid social shame, resulting in delayed or absent reporting. Despite these challenges, several supporting factors were identified. Institutional commitment within the Bulukumba Police, particularly within the PPA Unit, has encouraged proactive initiatives such as legal awareness campaigns, collaboration with community leaders, and training programs related to gender-based violence. Moreover, cooperation with hospitals, social institutions, and local NGOs has contributed to the development of a more responsive child protection network. Community leaders and educators in certain areas have also begun encouraging victims to report cases and seek legal assistance, thereby helping to reduce the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence.

4.2. Discussion

The results of this study highlight that the effectiveness of police functions in handling sexual violence against children cannot be understood solely through procedural law enforcement performance. Instead, it must be analyzed through broader legal and sociological frameworks that consider institutional capacity, legal norms, and societal attitudes. In this regard, the findings can be interpreted through the perspective of legal system theory proposed by Lawrence M. Friedman, which emphasizes the interaction between legal structure, legal substance, and legal culture. From the structural perspective, the Bulukumba

Police, particularly the PPA Unit, represent the institutional mechanism responsible for enforcing laws related to child protection. The increasing number of cases reaching the P21 stage indicates an improvement in investigative capacity and coordination with prosecutorial authorities. However, the study also reveals structural limitations, including the shortage of trained investigators and inadequate infrastructure for handling child victims. These findings suggest that although institutional structures exist, their operational effectiveness remains constrained by resource limitations.

In terms of legal substance, Indonesia has established a relatively comprehensive legal framework for addressing sexual violence against children, including Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection and various provisions in the Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code. These regulations provide a normative basis for protecting children and prosecuting perpetrators. Nevertheless, the findings of this study indicate a gap between normative legal provisions and their implementation in practice. For instance, although legal frameworks mandate child-friendly procedures and victim protection measures, the lack of adequate facilities and trained personnel limits the practical realization of these legal guarantees. The cultural dimension also plays a crucial role in shaping the effectiveness of law enforcement. In Bulukumba Regency, cultural norms related to family honor and social stigma often discourage victims from reporting incidents of sexual violence. This phenomenon reflects what Friedman describes as legal culture, namely the attitudes, beliefs, and expectations of society toward the law. When legal culture discourages reporting or supports informal settlements, the ability of law enforcement institutions to perform their functions becomes significantly constrained.

The findings of this study also align with the theory of law enforcement proposed by Soerjono Soekanto, which argues that effective law enforcement depends on three main elements: legal norms, law enforcement institutions, and societal participation. Although the normative framework for addressing sexual violence against children in Indonesia is relatively strong, the effectiveness of enforcement is hindered by limitations in institutional capacity and public participation. The shortage of investigators, limited training in child-sensitive investigative approaches, and inadequate supporting facilities demonstrate weaknesses within the law enforcement apparatus. At the same time, societal reluctance to report cases due to stigma or cultural pressure further weakens the enforcement process. Another theoretical perspective relevant to this study is the theory of legal protection proposed by Philipus M. Hadjon, which emphasizes the obligation of the state to ensure legal certainty and justice for citizens through preventive and repressive legal mechanisms. In the context of sexual violence against children, legal protection must extend beyond formal legal proceedings to include psychological recovery, social rehabilitation, and long-term protection for victims. The findings of this study indicate that although the police provide initial protection during the investigative process, the continuity of victim support largely depends on external institutions. This situation highlights the need for stronger institutional integration between law enforcement agencies and social support systems.

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that the police in Bulukumba Regency have implemented their functions in handling sexual violence cases involving children through preventive, repressive, and protective mechanisms. However, the effectiveness of these functions remains influenced by structural constraints, cultural factors, and institutional coordination challenges. Strengthening the role of the police therefore requires a comprehensive approach that includes improving institutional capacity, expanding training for investigators, developing child-friendly investigative facilities, and promoting legal awareness within the community. By integrating these institutional, legal, and cultural dimensions, the police can play a more effective role in building a sustainable child protection system and ensuring that victims of sexual violence receive justice, protection, and recovery.

V. Conclusion

This study concludes that the police function in handling cases of sexual violence against children in Bulukumba Regency has been implemented through three main dimensions: preventive actions, repressive law enforcement, and protection accompanied by cross-sectoral coordination. Preventive efforts are carried out through legal awareness programs and community education, particularly in schools and community groups, to increase public understanding of the risks and consequences of sexual violence against children. In the repressive dimension, the Women and Children Protection Unit (PPA) of the Bulukumba Resort Police acts as the frontline institution responsible for investigation and case handling, applying a child-sensitive approach during investigative procedures. Legal processes are conducted while considering the psychological condition of victims and ensuring careful evidence collection to minimize further trauma. However, the effectiveness of these police functions is still influenced by several internal and external factors, including limitations in human resources, uneven investigative capacity, inadequate supporting facilities, and social conditions such as victims' psychological trauma and the reluctance of communities to report incidents due to stigma.

The findings of this study contribute theoretically to the development of criminal law and criminology studies, particularly in understanding the function of law enforcement institutions through the perspective of the legal system, which emphasizes the interaction between legal structure, legal substance, and legal culture. The results demonstrate that the effectiveness of law enforcement in cases of sexual violence against children is not determined solely by the existence of strong legal regulations but also by the institutional capacity of law enforcement officers and the support of societal legal culture. From a practical perspective, this study offers managerial implications for police institutions and related stakeholders to strengthen the capacity of investigators through specialized training on child protection and gender-sensitive approaches, improve child-friendly investigation facilities, and develop more integrated cross-sector coordination systems among the police, the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Agency (DP3A), social services, healthcare institutions, and victim assistance organizations.

Despite providing empirical insights into police functions in handling sexual violence against children in Bulukumba Regency, this study has several limitations. The research employed an empirical approach with a limited number of informants, primarily focusing on police officers at the district police level, which means that perspectives from victims, victims' families, and supporting institutions were not explored extensively. Furthermore, the study is limited to the local context of Bulukumba Regency, which requires caution when generalizing the findings to other regions. Future research is therefore recommended to involve a broader range of actors within the child protection system, adopt interdisciplinary approaches, and expand the geographical scope of study in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of law enforcement and protection mechanisms for child victims of sexual violence across different regions.

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