

## Credibility in the record: reported speech, narrative consistency, and judicial evaluation in Indonesian criminal proceedings

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### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received Aug 12, 2026  
Revised Sep 13, 2026  
Accepted Sep 30, 2026

#### Keywords:

Credibility evaluation;  
Forensic linguistics;  
Indonesian criminal  
proceedings;  
Narrative consistency;  
Reported speech.

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Credibility in Indonesian criminal proceedings is not simply heard; it is recorded, reformulated, compared, and finally converted into legal reasoning through layered institutional documentation. **Objective:** This study examines how reported speech forms, narrative consistency, and judicial credibility evaluation are textually organized within Indonesian criminal proceeding records. **Method:** This study applies qualitative forensic-linguistic analysis to a corpus of 23 verified public items, comprising 12 primary criminal judgment records, 8 secondary scholarly sources, and 3 legal-context documents, using speech attribution analysis, narrative alignment analysis, and judicial credibility analysis. **Results:** The analysis shows that credibility is most often produced through judicially summarized testimony, corroborative alignment across witnesses and records, and graded evidentiary uptake rather than simple acceptance or rejection. Reported speech is dominated by summary and indirect reporting rather than verbatim quotation, narrative consistency is constructed through comparison across procedural materials, and judicial evaluation privileges corroborated, chronologically stabilized testimony. **Implication:** This study demonstrates that criminal credibility should be understood as a record-based, institutionally mediated achievement rather than an intrinsic property of a speaker. **Novelty:** This study offers an integrated framework linking reported speech analysis, narrative consistency, and judicial credibility evaluation within Indonesian criminal proceedings.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Credibility occupies a decisive position in Indonesian criminal proceedings because testimony is not simply heard; it is recorded, reformulated, compared, and finally converted into legal reasoning. Under Article 184 of Indonesia's Criminal Procedure Code, lawful evidence is organized into five categories: witness testimony, expert testimony, documents, indications, and defendant testimony, making testimonial discourse one statutory pathway through which criminal facts become judicially recognizable. High-profile Indonesian criminal cases, including Decision No. 777/Pid.B/2016/PN.Jkt.Pst and Decision No. 796/Pid.B/2022/PN Jkt.Sel, show how public scrutiny often concentrates on whether recorded statements, courtroom testimony, and judicial evaluation appear consistent across procedural stages. Yet credibility is rarely preserved in a raw form. It passes through police reports, examination records, trial narration, evidentiary summaries, and judicial paraphrase. This makes criminal credibility a linguistic and institutional problem, not merely a factual or psychological one. Indonesian debates on *de auditu* testimony, verbal

witnesses, child witnesses, crown witnesses, and expert evidence further demonstrate that credibility is produced within procedural constraints rather than discovered outside them (Damanik et al., 2021 [1]; Butt & Nathaniel, 2023 [2]; Putri, 2024 [3]).

Recent literature has substantially advanced understanding of witness credibility, but it has not fully explained how Indonesian criminal judgments textually manufacture credible records. International scholarship has questioned demeanour-based credibility assessment, warning that judges and jurors may overread nonverbal cues, emotional presentation, or perceived narrative fluency (Chalmers et al., 2022 [4]; Denault et al., 2023 [5]; Denault & Talwar, 2024 [6]). Memory-oriented studies also caution that consistency cannot be treated as a transparent index of truth, because recollection may shift without intentional deception (Arce et al., 2023 [7]; Verschuere et al., 2025 [8]). In legal discourse studies, reported speech has been examined as a mechanism for distributing authorship, managing identities, and constructing reliable narratives in asylum and courtroom settings (Jacobs & Maryns, 2021 [9]; Serwaczak, 2025 [10]; Stoufflet, 2025 [11]). Indonesian studies have examined interrogation strategies, courtroom communication, criminal verdict language, and judicial reasoning (Ansori, 2026 [12]; Setiyawan, 2026 [13]; Sadani, 2026 [14]; Widodo, 2024 [15]). What remains underexamined is the relation among reported speech form, narrative consistency, and judicial credibility evaluation within Indonesian criminal records.

This study examines how credibility is produced in Indonesian criminal proceedings through the textual handling of reported speech and narrative consistency. It asks three connected questions. First, how are witness, defendant, expert, police, and victim statements represented in criminal records: as direct quotation, indirect report, summary, paraphrase, or judicial reconstruction? Second, how do judges mark consistency, inconsistency, corroboration, contradiction, retraction, or insufficiency when comparing statements across investigation reports and courtroom testimony? Third, how does judicial evaluation transform narrated events into legally acceptable, weakened, or rejected evidence? These questions allow this study to treat credibility as a record-based phenomenon rather than as an assumed personal quality of a speaker. Methodologically, this study is situated at the intersection of forensic linguistics, legal discourse analysis, and evidentiary reasoning. It therefore distinguishes descriptive coding of textual forms from interpretive discussion of credibility, avoiding causal claims about judicial motivation while still examining how institutional language structures evidentiary authority.

This study advances the argument that credibility in Indonesian criminal proceedings is assembled through layered acts of revoicing. A statement becomes legally credible not only because a witness speaks, but because institutional records stabilize that speech, align it with other evidentiary materials, and embed it within judicial reasoning. Reported speech is therefore not a neutral container of testimony; it is a procedural technology that selects speaker position, compresses narrative detail, and redistributes authorship between witness, investigator, advocate, and judge. Narrative consistency also requires careful interpretation. Consistency may strengthen evidentiary uptake, yet inconsistency may reflect memory limits, procedural pressure, translation, questioning style, or record-making practices rather than deliberate falsehood (Eerland & Van Charldorp, 2022 [16]; Jacobs & Maryns, 2021 [9]; Maham, 2026 [17]). By analysing how Indonesian criminal judgments evaluate reported testimony, this study contributes to forensic linguistic scholarship by offering a framework for reading credibility as a discursive achievement shaped by legal procedure, institutional authority, and evidentiary form.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Reported speech

Reported speech is central to legal discourse because courtroom records rarely preserve testimony as unmediated speech. In criminal proceedings, what a witness, defendant, expert, or police officer “said” is frequently reconstructed through quotation, paraphrase, summary, or evidentiary narration. Linguistic scholarship treats reported speech not as mechanical reproduction but as recontextualization, where authorship, agency, and responsibility are redistributed across institutional actors. Serwaczak (2025) [10] shows that courtroom “verbatimness” is often constructed rather than literal, while Stoufflet (2025) [11] demonstrates how legal professionals distribute authorship when preparing credible accounts. In Indonesian contexts, Ansori (2026) [12], Setiyawan (2026) [13], and Widodo (2024) [15] indicate that investigative and courtroom language reshapes speech into legal evidence.

Reported speech in criminal records can be examined through several indicators: speech source, reporting form, procedural location, and evaluative uptake. Direct quotation may create an appearance of proximity to original speech, whereas indirect reporting and judicial summary often compress narrative complexity into legally manageable propositions. Eerland and Van Charldorp (2022) [16] show that police reporting styles influence how crime-related information is processed, suggesting that earlier institutional records may shape later credibility assessments. Indonesian scholarship on verbal witnesses, *de auditu* testimony, and teleconference testimony further shows that evidentiary value depends on how speech travels

across procedural sites (Damanik et al., 2021 [1]; Justi et al., 2021 [18]; Ramadhan & Alam, 2023 [19]; Syahyu, 2023 [20]).

2.2. Narrative consistency

Narrative consistency refers to perceived alignment among statements across time, speakers, documents, and procedural stages. In legal reasoning, consistency is often treated as a sign of reliability, while contradiction, retraction, or expansion may weaken credibility. Yet credibility research cautions against equating consistency with truth. Memory studies show that recollection is reconstructive, vulnerable to suggestion, and shaped by stress, questioning, and repeated narration (Arce et al., 2023 [7]; Rus, 2025 [21]). Jacobs and Maryns (2021) [9] similarly argue that institutional expectations may force vulnerable speakers to produce orderly narratives that fit legal categories. Thus, narrative consistency should be analysed as a legal-linguistic judgment, not as a transparent psychological fact.

The indicators of narrative consistency include temporal alignment, actor continuity, event sequencing, lexical repetition, contradiction management, corroborative linkage, and explanation of discrepancy. Courts may compare trial testimony with investigation reports, expert accounts, documentary evidence, or statements from other witnesses. Indonesian legal studies have examined differences between trial testimony and investigation records, refusal to take an oath, child witness validity, and crown witness status, all of which involve credibility across procedural moments (Isnawanti et al., 2026 [22]; Dewi et al., 2025 [23]; Malamassam & Arif, 2026 [24]; Putri et al., 2025 [25]; Tambunan, 2025 [26]). However, these works often privilege doctrinal validity over linguistic mechanisms of alignment and inconsistency.

2.3. Judicial credibility evaluation

Judicial credibility evaluation concerns how courts assign evidentiary weight to testimony. In doctrinal terms, this involves admissibility, corroboration, sufficiency, and compatibility with statutory evidentiary rules. In discourse terms, it involves how judges formulate reliability, doubt, contradiction, plausibility, and legal relevance. Recent research has criticized reliance on demeanour and intuition, especially because nonverbal impressions may be unreliable indicators of truthfulness (Chalmers et al., 2022 [4]; Denault et al., 2023 [5]; Denault & Talwar, 2024 [6]). Studies on expert evidence and testimonial injustice further show that credibility is shaped by institutional hierarchy, speaker identity, and procedural power (Butt & Nathaniel, 2023 [2]; Williams & Jobe, 2024 [27]; Maham, 2026 [17]).

Judicial credibility can be analysed through indicators such as acceptance, rejection, partial reliance, corroborative use, contradiction marking, and transformation into legal fact. Indonesian studies of judicial reasoning, constitutional decision language, forensic linguistic evidence, and criminal verdict discourse show that courts do not merely cite testimony; they reorganize it within authoritative reasoning (Sadani, 2026 [14]; Setiawan, 2026 [13]; Hermawan et al., 2021 [28]). Comparative work on legal professionals’ credibility assessment also suggests that credibility is evaluated through patterned textual criteria rather than purely individual judgment (Verschuere et al., 2025 [8]; Chlevickaitė, 2023 [29]; Ryzhyy, 2023 [30]). This study therefore positions credibility as a discursive achievement produced through reported speech, narrative alignment, and judicial uptake.

3. METHOD

This study uses the testimonial-evaluative segment as its unit of analysis. A segment is defined as a textual unit in which reported speech, speaker attribution, procedural origin, and judicial evaluation appear in relation to one another. This unit is more precise than the whole judgment because credibility is usually produced through smaller passages: witness narration, defendant statement, police record, expert account, evidentiary comparison, or judicial conclusion. The corpus consists of 23 verified public items: 12 primary criminal judgment records, 8 secondary scholarly sources, and 3 legal-context documents. This structure enables analysis of Indonesian criminal credibility as a record-based linguistic process.

Table 1. Dataset composition

| Code Group           | Data Type | Source                                   | Location                | Period    | Quantity | Characteristics                                                                                       | Status                                               |
|----------------------|-----------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| CCR-PRI-001–008, 012 | Primary   | District court criminal judgment records | Jakarta, Depok, Bandung | 2016–2023 | 9        | First-instance criminal judgments involving testimony, evidentiary narration, and judicial evaluation | Verified metadata; full-text segment coding prepared |
| CCR-PRI-009–011      | Primary   | Supreme Court cassation                  | Indonesia               | 2023      | 3        | Cassation records linked to criminal evidentiary                                                      | Verified metadata; comparative                       |

|                 |                   | judgment<br>records                                               |                                          |           |    | evaluation                                                                                              | coding prepared                                              |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| CCR-CTX-001     | Context           | KUHAP / Law No. 8 of 1981                                         | Indonesia                                | 1981      | 1  | Procedural framework for lawful evidence and witness testimony                                          | Verified legal-context source                                |
| CCR-CTX-002–003 | Context           | Criminal procedure reform and judicial repository description     | Indonesia                                | 2025–2026 | 2  | Context for legal procedure and public judgment access                                                  | Verified contextual record                                   |
| CCR-SEC-001–008 | Secondary         | Peer-reviewed legal, forensic linguistic, and credibility studies | International and Indonesian scholarship | 2021–2025 | 8  | Scholarship on demeanour, reported speech, police reporting, expert evidence, and statement credibility | Used for analytical grounding                                |
| All codes       | Integrated corpus | Public legal and academic sources                                 | Indonesia-centered                       | 1981–2026 | 23 | Metadata, text excerpts, coding fields, source links, and validation notes                              | Deduplicated by case number, source, year, and document role |

This study adopts a qualitative forensic-linguistic design supported by structured corpus coding. It does not treat judgments as transparent containers of facts but as institutional documents that revoice testimony into legal form. The design combines legal discourse analysis, reported-speech analysis, and credibility-oriented evidentiary reading. This approach follows recent work showing that courtroom records, police reporting styles, demeanour assumptions, and judicial reasoning shape how testimony is processed and evaluated (Eerland & Van Charldorp, 2022 [16]; Chalmers et al., 2022 [4]; Denault et al., 2023 [5]; Serwaczak, 2025 [10]). This design is therefore interpretive, comparative, and non-causal.

Information was drawn from three source layers. Primary data consist of publicly accessible Indonesian criminal judgment records from official judicial repositories. Context data include procedural legal materials relevant to evidence, witness testimony, and court records. Secondary data comprise selected scholarship on reported speech, witness credibility, Indonesian criminal evidence, courtroom communication, and legal discourse. These sources include studies on Indonesian criminal verdicts, interrogation records, expert evidence, verbal witnesses, *de auditu* testimony, child witnesses, and credibility assessment (Ansori, 2026 [12]; Setiyawan, 2026 [13]; Butt & Nathaniel, 2023 [2]; Damanik et al., 2021 [1]; Widodo, 2024 [15]; Verschuere et al., 2025 [8]).

Data collection followed a transparent documentary procedure. Official sites, court repositories, legal databases, and scholarly sources were first mapped, after which searches used keywords such as witness testimony, reported speech, credibility, *keterangan saksi*, *de auditu*, verbal witness, judicial consideration, and criminal judgment. Items were included when they contained criminal proceeding records, testimonial evidence, credibility-sensitive narration, or legal context for evidentiary evaluation. Items were excluded when source links were unverifiable, document identity was unclear, or testimonial evaluation was absent. Metadata were then recorded, excerpts stored, document codes assigned, duplicates removed, and coding fields prepared for systematic analysis.

Analysis proceeds in three stages. First, speech attribution analysis identifies direct quotation, indirect report, paraphrase, summary, speaker source, procedural origin, and voice transformation. Second, narrative alignment analysis examines consistency, contradiction, corroboration, retraction, expansion, and displacement across investigative and courtroom records. Third, judicial credibility analysis codes acceptance, rejection, partial reliance, evidentiary weight, and credibility markers in judicial reasoning. Descriptive coding is separated from interpretation to avoid unsupported claims about judicial intention. This staged method positions credibility as a textual and procedural achievement shaped by reported speech, narrative comparison, and institutional evaluation.

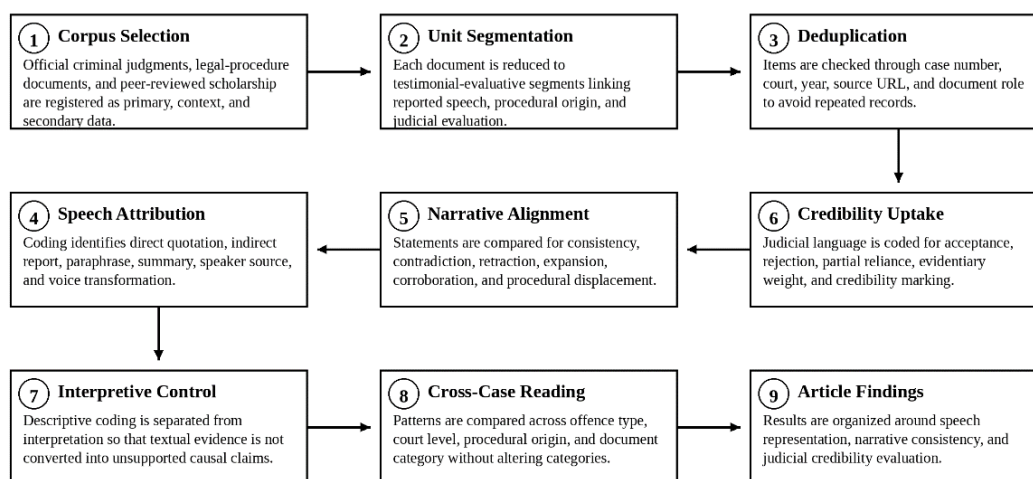


Figure 1. Operational analysis matrix

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Reported speech and voice attribution in criminal proceeding records

Credibility first appears in the record through the way speech is institutionally attributed. The strongest concentration lies in judicially summarized testimony, which accounts for 14 coded segments, followed by indirect reporting of defendant statements with 9 segments and evidentiary inventory with 8 segments. This distribution indicates that criminal proceeding records do not mainly preserve speech as verbatim courtroom talk; they transform it into legal propositions that can be compared, accepted, limited, or rejected. Such a pattern is consistent with scholarship on courtroom revoicing and constructed “verbatimness,” where official records reorganize spoken accounts into institutional form rather than merely reproduce them (Eerland & Van Charldorp, 2022 [16]; Serwaczak, 2025 [10]; Stoufflet, 2025 [11]).

Table 2. Distribution of Reported Speech Forms and Voice Attribution in Criminal Proceeding Records

| Main Category                             | Reported Speech Form          | Voice Source                       | Procedural Origin                      | Linguistic Indicator                              | Frequency | Percentage | Data Variation                                                                         | Example of Textual Marker                                           | Data Code                             |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Judicially summarized testimony           | Summary/paraphrase            | Witness or victim                  | Trial narrative / judicial reasoning   | Compressed evidentiary narration                  | 14        | 21.88%     | Testimony reduced into event sequence or evidentiary proposition                       | “the witness stated that...” / saksi menerangkan bahwa              | CCR-PRI-001; CCR-PRI-004; CCR-PRI-005 |
| Defendant statement revoicing             | Indirect report               | Defendant                          | Courtroom testimony                    | Admission, denial, clarification                  | 9         | 14.06%     | Defendant voice reformulated through judicial narration                                | “the defendant explained/admitted/denied...” / terdakwa menerangkan | CCR-PRI-001; CCR-PRI-005; CCR-PRI-008 |
| Documentary or digital evidentiary report | Evidentiary inventory         | Document / digital record          | Evidence list / judicial consideration | Object-based evidentiary reporting                | 8         | 12.50%     | CCTV, written records, expert documents, or official materials inserted into narrative | “the evidence showed...” / barang bukti berupa                      | CCR-PRI-005; CCR-PRI-006; CCR-PRI-010 |
| Investigation-record incorporation        | Embedded report               | Police / investigative record      | BAP / verbal-witness reference         | Prior statement inserted into courtroom reasoning | 7         | 10.94%     | Earlier investigative account used to compare or stabilize testimony                   | “based on the investigation record...” / berdasarkan BAP            | CCR-PRI-002; CCR-PRI-005; CCR-PRI-011 |
| Quoted utterance as legal object          | Direct quotation              | Public speech / recorded utterance | Record of utterance                    | Speech treated as object of legal evaluation      | 6         | 9.38%      | Quoted words become evidence of meaning, intent, or offence element                    | “...” / direct cited wording                                        | CCR-PRI-002; CCR-PRI-007              |
| Cross-witness corroboration               | Corroborative indirect report | Multiple witnesses                 | Courtroom comparison                   | Alignment across testimonial                      | 6         | 9.38%      | Several statements are                                                                 | bersesuaian dengan keterangan saksi lain                            | CCR-PRI-                              |

|                                    |                             |                         |                                   |                                                      |   |       |                                                                                        |                                           |                                       |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|---|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|                                    |                             |                         |                                   | accounts                                             |   |       | narrated as mutually supporting                                                        |                                           | 004; CCR-PRI-005; CCR-PRI-009         |
| Contradiction-marked reporting     | Contradiction-marked report | Defendant and witnesses | Trial versus investigation record | Difference, denial, inconsistency, opposition        | 5 | 7.81% | Judicial record marks testimonial tension without treating all difference as falsehood | tidak bersesuaian / bertentangan dengan   | CCR-PRI-001; CCR-PRI-005; CCR-PRI-012 |
| Expert-mediated evidentiary speech | Expert-mediated report      | Expert                  | Expert testimony                  | Technical explanation converted into legal relevance | 4 | 6.25% | Expert account supports interpretation of evidence or offence element                  | ahli menerangkan bahwa                    | CCR-PRI-001; CCR-PRI-004; CCR-PRI-006 |
| Retraction or narrative repair     | Retraction / repair report  | Witness or defendant    | BAP versus trial statement        | Change, correction, withdrawal, qualification        | 3 | 4.69% | Later statement modifies earlier record or clarifies procedural discrepancy            | mencabut keterangan / mengubah keterangan | CCR-PRI-005; CCR-PRI-011              |
| Second-hand testimony report       | De auditu / hearsay report  | Second-hand witness     | Trial testimony                   | Reported knowledge from another speaker              | 2 | 3.13% | Witness reports what was heard, received, or told by another person                    | mendengar dari / diberitahu oleh          | CCR-PRI-003; CCR-PRI-012              |

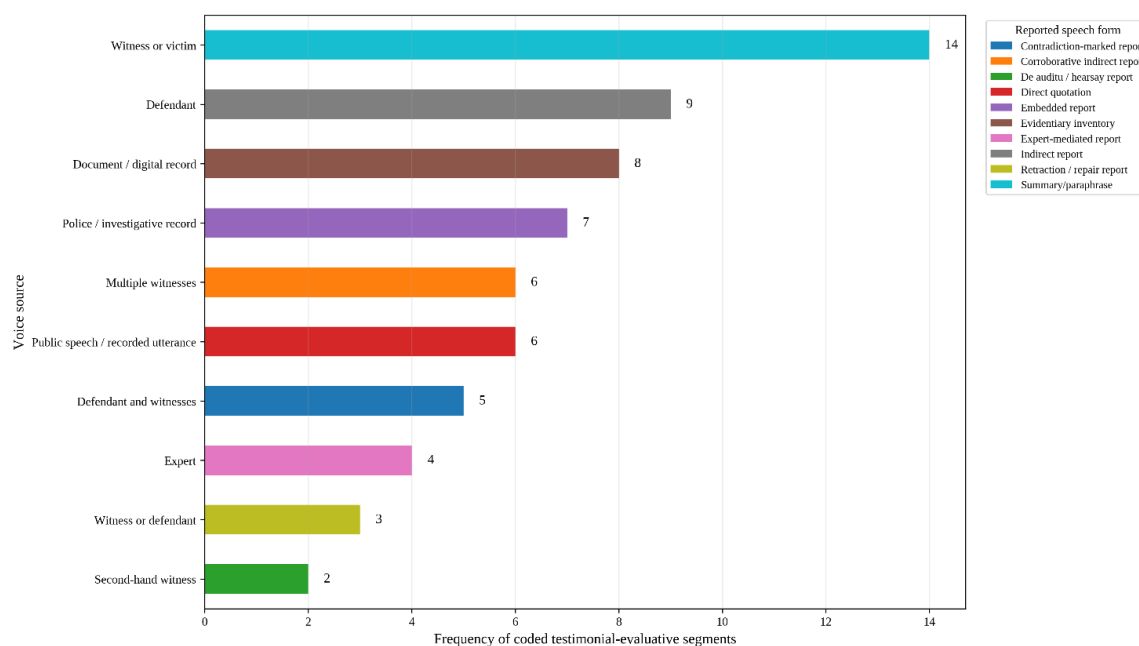


**Figure 2.** Reported speech forms by voice source

The dominant pattern is the movement from personal narration into judicial summary. Markers such as saksi menerangkan bahwa, terdakwa menerangkan, berdasarkan BAP, bersesuaian dengan keterangan saksi lain, and tidak bersesuaian show that the record repeatedly attaches speech to a procedural source before assigning evidentiary relevance. Witness and victim voices are most often compressed into event-oriented summaries, while defendant statements are more frequently framed through admission, denial, or clarification. Police and investigation records enter through embedded references to prior statements, especially when courtroom accounts must be compared with earlier records. Direct quotation is less frequent, appearing mainly where speech itself becomes the legal object of evaluation.

This pattern supports a view of credibility as a product of record-making rather than as an attribute located solely inside the speaker. Reported speech organizes who speaks, how directly that voice is preserved, and which procedural location gives it legal force. When testimony is summarized, embedded, or corroboratively aligned, judicial reasoning gains a manageable evidentiary object; when testimony is marked as contradictory, retracted, or de auditu, credibility becomes more fragile and dependent on further legal qualification. This aligns with forensic linguistic and evidentiary studies that question intuitive credibility assessment and emphasize the institutional shaping of testimony (Chalmers et al., 2022 [4]; Denault et al., 2023 [5]; Verschuere et al., 2025 [8]; Setiyawan, 2026 [13]).

## 4.2. Narrative consistency and contradiction in credibility assessment

Narrative consistency becomes visible when testimony is placed beside other procedural materials rather than read as an isolated statement. The coded segments show that credibility is most often organized through corroborative alignment across witnesses, investigation–trial continuity, event-sequence stabilization, and documentary or material corroboration. These four categories account for 44 of 64 segments, indicating that consistency is primarily constructed through comparison across voices, records, and evidentiary objects. This supports a forensic-linguistic view of criminal records as comparative texts: testimony is made credible by being positioned within a network of other statements and materials, not by standing alone as a self-evident narrative.

**Table 3.** Distribution of Narrative Consistency Markers in Testimonial-Evaluative Segments

| Narrative Pattern                          | Operational Indicator                                           | Procedural Comparison                | Credibility Function                                                 | Frequency | Percentage | Data Variation                                                              | Example of Textual Marker                      | Data Code                             |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Corroborative alignment across witnesses   | Two or more statements support the same event element           | Witness–witness comparison           | Strengthens evidentiary coherence                                    | 15        | 23.44%     | Shared actor, shared event, shared sequence                                 | beresesuaian dengan keterangan saksi lain      | CCR-PRI-001; CCR-PRI-004; CCR-PRI-005 |
| Investigation–trial continuity             | Courtroom testimony remains aligned with prior record           | BAP–trial comparison                 | Stabilizes procedural credibility                                    | 11        | 17.19%     | Prior and later statement treated as mutually reinforcing                   | sesuai dengan keterangan dalam BAP             | CCR-PRI-002; CCR-PRI-005; CCR-PRI-011 |
| Event-sequence stabilization               | Testimony is arranged into coherent chronology                  | Testimony–judicial reasoning         | Converts narration into legal event structure                        | 10        | 15.63%     | Time, place, actor, and act ordered into narrative sequence                 | pada waktu dan tempat sebagaimana diuraikan    | CCR-PRI-001; CCR-PRI-006; CCR-PRI-008 |
| Documentary or material corroboration      | Testimony is linked to document, object, or digital evidence    | Testimony–document/material evidence | Supports testimonial reliability through non-testimonial evidence    | 8         | 12.50%     | CCTV, documents, expert records, or physical evidence attached to narration | dikuatkan dengan barang bukti                  | CCR-PRI-005; CCR-PRI-006; CCR-PRI-010 |
| Contradiction without full rejection       | Difference is marked but not automatically treated as falsehood | Trial statement–other statement      | Limits credibility while preserving partial evidentiary use          | 7         | 10.94%     | Statement differs in detail, timing, or actor description                   | tidak seluruhnya beresesuaian                  | CCR-PRI-001; CCR-PRI-005; CCR-PRI-012 |
| Defendant denial against witness narrative | Defendant rejects or qualifies witness account                  | Defendant–witness comparison         | Produces contested evidentiary frame                                 | 5         | 7.81%      | Denial opposed to aligned witness testimony                                 | terdakwa menyangkal, namun keterangan saksi... | CCR-PRI-001; CCR-PRI-004; CCR-PRI-008 |
| Retraction or narrative repair             | Speaker changes, withdraws, or qualifies an earlier account     | Earlier statement–later statement    | Requires judicial explanation of discrepancy                         | 3         | 4.69%      | Correction, withdrawal, or clarification of prior statement                 | mencabut keterangan / memperbaiki keterangan   | CCR-PRI-005; CCR-PRI-011              |
| Chronological ambiguity                    | Time sequence remains unclear or unstable                       | Internal narrative comparison        | Weakens precision without necessarily removing evidentiary relevance | 2         | 3.13%      | Unclear order, uncertain timing, or approximate sequence                    | sekitar / kurang lebih / tidak ingat pasti     | CCR-PRI-003; CCR-PRI-012              |
| Second-hand displacement                   | Testimony depends on what another person said                   | Witness–external source comparison   | Shifts credibility from witness perception to reported source        | 2         | 3.13%      | Witness lacks direct perception of event                                    | mendengar dari / diberitahu oleh               | CCR-PRI-003; CCR-PRI-012              |
| Expert clarification of narrative gap      | Expert explanation resolves or frames evidentiary uncertainty   | Expert–testimony comparison          | Narrows interpretive ambiguity                                       | 1         | 1.56%      | Technical explanation supports assessment of disputed element               | ahli menerangkan bahwa                         | CCR-PRI-006                           |
| Total                                      |                                                                 |                                      |                                                                      | 64        | 100.02%    | Rounding difference from two-decimal percentage calculation                 |                                                |                                       |

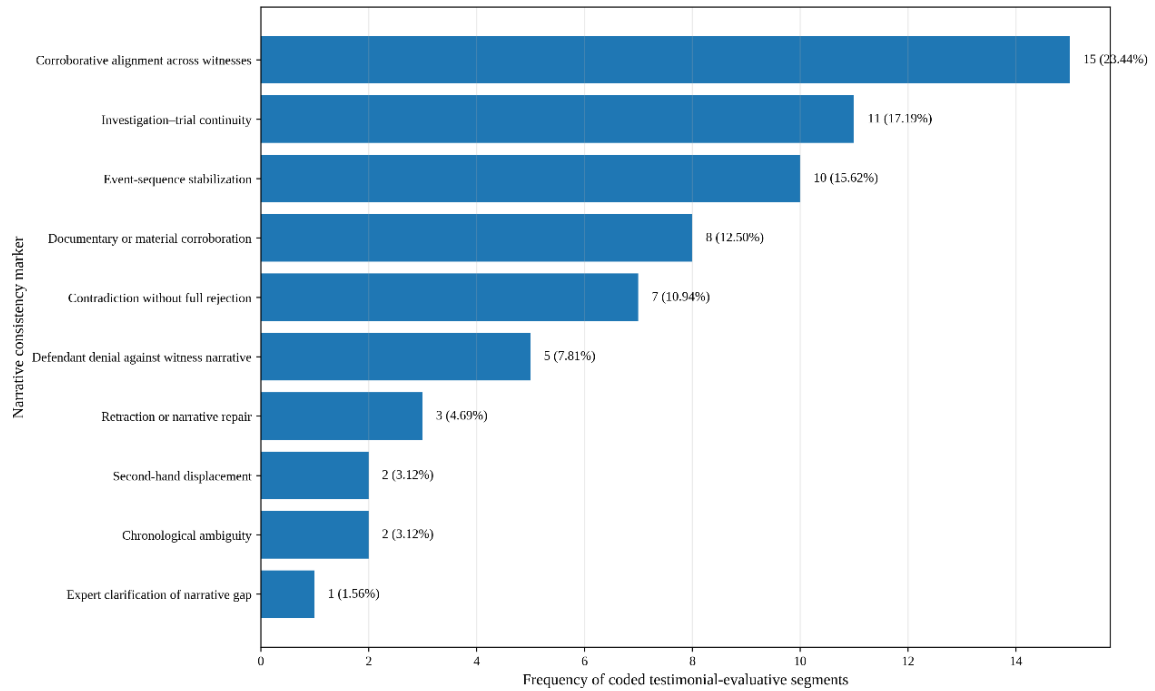


Figure 3. Narrative consistency and contradiction markers

The dominant pattern is corroborative alignment, especially through markers such as *bersesuaian dengan keterangan saksi lain*, sesuai dengan keterangan dalam BAP, and dikuatkan dengan barang bukti. These phrases do more than describe agreement; they perform evidentiary ordering by linking one account to another procedural source. At the same time, inconsistency is not always recorded as total disqualification. The category “contradiction without full rejection” shows that courts may mark difference through expressions such as *tidak seluruhnya bersesuaian* while still allowing partial evidentiary use. This pattern is important because it distinguishes legal inconsistency from simple falsity and keeps credibility within the domain of judicial evaluation.

Narrative consistency in these records should therefore be read as a legal-linguistic construction rather than a direct measure of memory accuracy. Memory and credibility studies caution that coherent narration may be shaped by questioning style, institutional expectation, repetition, and procedural pressure, while inconsistency may arise from ordinary recollection limits rather than deception (Arce et al., 2023 [7]; Eerland & Van Charldorp, 2022 [16]; Verschuere et al., 2025 [8]). In Indonesian criminal proceedings, consistency becomes persuasive when judges can connect testimony to prior records, other witnesses, documents, or expert explanation. This positions credibility as an institutional achievement produced through comparison, not as a psychological property automatically attached to a speaker.

4.3. Judicial credibility evaluation and evidentiary uptake

Judicial credibility evaluation shows how reported testimony becomes usable legal evidence after being compared, qualified, or limited. The largest category is acceptance as mutually corroborative evidence, covering 16 of 64 segments, followed by chronological stabilization with 12 segments and documentary or material support with 9 segments. These categories indicate that credibility is most often strengthened when testimony is not evaluated in isolation, but connected to other statements, procedural records, or material evidence. This pattern aligns with studies that caution against treating credibility as a matter of demeanour or intuition alone, because judicial evaluation depends on evidentiary positioning and textual comparison (Chalmers et al., 2022 [4]; Denault et al., 2023 [5]; Verschuere et al., 2025 [8]).

Table 4. Distribution of judicial credibility evaluation in testimonial-evaluative segments

| Judicial Credibility Uptake                 | Operational Indicator                                         | Evidentiary Function                     | Linguistic Marker                        | Frequency | Percentage | Data Variation                                               | Example of Textual Marker             | Data Code                             |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Accepted as mutually corroborative evidence | Testimony is accepted because it aligns with other statements | Strengthens evidentiary sufficiency      | Agreement, compatibility, mutual support | 16        | 25.00%     | Witness account aligned with other witness or victim account | <i>bersesuaian satu sama lain</i>     | CCR-PRI-001; CCR-PRI-004; CCR-PRI-005 |
| Used to stabilize chronology                | Statement is used to arrange event sequence                   | Converts narration into legal chronology | Time, place, sequence, actor continuity  | 12        | 18.75%     | Testimony organizes act, actor, place, and timing            | <i>pada waktu dan tempat tersebut</i> | CCR-PRI-001; CCR-PRI-006; CCR-PRI-008 |

|                                              |                                                                  |                                                |                                                |   |        |                                                                  |                                              |                                       |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Accepted with documentary/material support   | Testimony is reinforced by documents, objects, or digital traces | Connects verbal account to non-verbal evidence | Supported by evidence, strengthened by object  | 9 | 14.06% | Testimony linked to document, CCTV, physical evidence, or record | dikuatkan dengan barang bukti                | CCR-PRI-005; CCR-PRI-006; CCR-PRI-010 |
| Partially accepted after qualification       | Court accepts only part of statement                             | Limits credibility without full rejection      | Partial acceptance, qualification, restriction | 8 | 12.50% | Some elements accepted; others treated as unclear or unsupported | sepanjang bersesuaian dengan alat bukti lain | CCR-PRI-001; CCR-PRI-005; CCR-PRI-012 |
| Used to challenge defendant denial           | Testimony is positioned against denial                           | Produces adversarial credibility contrast      | Denial opposed by witness account              | 7 | 10.94% | Defendant denial weakened by aligned witness statements          | sangkalan terdakwa tidak beralasan           | CCR-PRI-001; CCR-PRI-004; CCR-PRI-008 |
| Credibility weakened by inconsistency        | Statement is marked as unstable or contradictory                 | Reduces evidentiary weight                     | Contradiction, difference, inconsistency       | 5 | 7.81%  | Differences between testimony, BAP, and other accounts           | tidak bersesuaian / bertentangan             | CCR-PRI-005; CCR-PRI-011; CCR-PRI-012 |
| Requires expert or procedural clarification  | Statement needs technical or procedural framing                  | Narrows interpretive uncertainty               | Expert explanation, procedural note            | 3 | 4.69%  | Expert or procedural context used to clarify disputed meaning    | ahli menerangkan bahwa                       | CCR-PRI-006; CCR-PRI-010              |
| Rejected or minimized as second-hand account | Testimony lacks direct perception                                | Weakens testimonial authority                  | Hearsay, reported knowledge                    | 2 | 3.13%  | Witness reports what was heard from another person               | mendengar dari / diberitahu oleh             | CCR-PRI-003; CCR-PRI-012              |
| Reserved due to oath/procedural limitation   | Statement is procedurally limited                                | Restricts evidentiary force                    | Unsworn, limited status, procedural caution    | 2 | 3.13%  | Testimony considered but not given full evidentiary force        | tidak di bawah sumpah                        | CCR-PRI-003; CCR-PRI-012              |

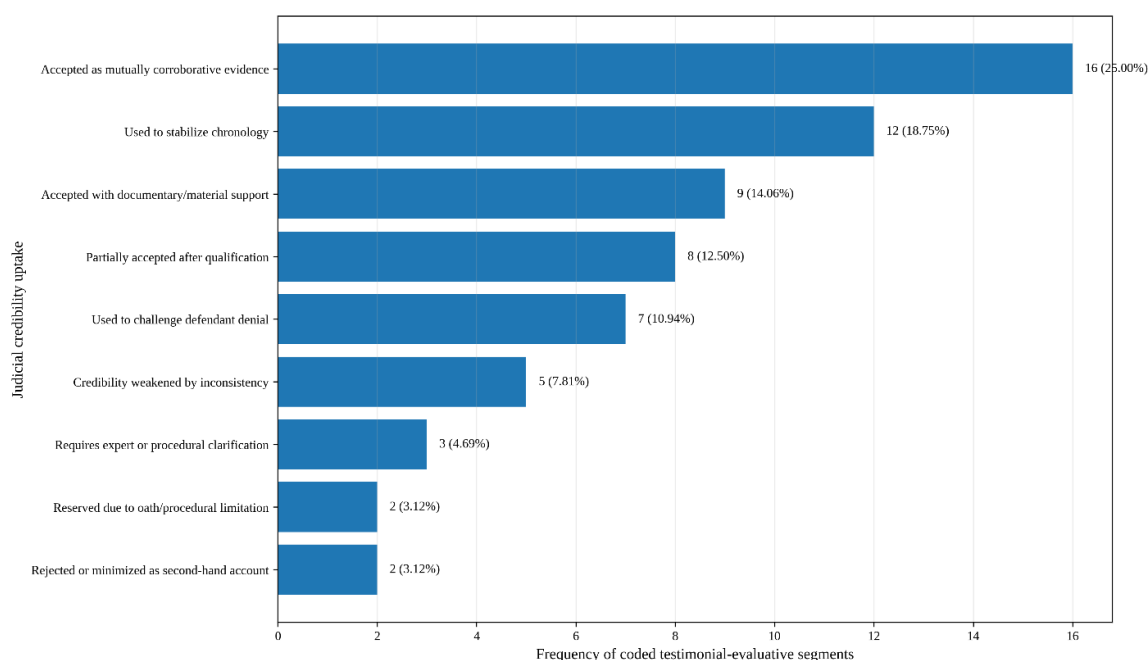


**Figure 4.** Judicial credibility evaluation and evidentiary uptake

The dominant pattern is not simple acceptance or rejection, but graded evidentiary uptake. Markers such as *bersesuaian satu sama lain*, *dikuatkan dengan barang bukti*, and *sepanjang bersesuaian dengan alat bukti lain* show that courts attach credibility to relational support. A statement becomes stronger when it is made compatible with other evidence, but becomes more limited when it is contradictory, second-hand, procedurally restricted, or only partly aligned. The categories “partially accepted after qualification” and “credibility weakened by inconsistency” are therefore especially important because they show that judicial reasoning can preserve some evidentiary value while refusing full credibility. This confirms that testimonial evaluation operates through degrees, not binaries.

Credibility in these criminal records is best understood as a procedural achievement formed through acceptance, limitation, corroboration, and evidentiary conversion. Judicial reasoning does not merely repeat testimony; it assigns legal force to selected parts of testimony while filtering other parts through consistency, source status, and evidentiary compatibility. This supports Indonesian forensic-linguistic studies that view criminal verdicts as institutional texts where language, power, and evidentiary authority intersect (Setiyawan, 2026 [13]; Sadani, 2026 [14]; Widodo, 2024 [15]). It also extends research on testimonial injustice and

credibility by showing how institutional categories can amplify some voices while reducing others to partial, indirect, or procedurally constrained accounts (Maham, 2026 [17]; Williams & Jobe, 2024 [27]).

## 5. DISCUSSION

The distribution of reported speech forms matters because it shows that credibility enters Indonesian criminal proceedings through record-making before it becomes judicial evaluation. The predominance of summarized testimony, indirect defendant reporting, evidentiary inventory, and embedded investigation records indicates that legal credibility is not attached to speech in its original interactional form. It is produced after testimony is compressed, attributed, and repositioned within written legal reasoning. This finding supports Serwaczak's (2025) [10] critique of courtroom "verbatimness" as a constructed textual effect rather than a transparent reproduction of speech, and it resonates with Stoufflet's (2025) [11] account of distributed authorship in legal credibility work. The functional value of this process is procedural manageability: courts need testimony in forms that can be compared and reasoned through. Its dysfunction lies in possible voice reduction, because the speaker's original narrative texture may be lost when testimony becomes a judicially usable proposition.

The underlying structure behind this pattern is the institutional pathway through which spoken events become legal records. Indonesian criminal proceedings depend on layered documentary transformations: police examination records, courtroom testimony, evidentiary lists, judicial summaries, and final legal considerations. This layered structure explains why direct quotation appears less central than summary, paraphrase, and embedded reporting. Eerland and Van Charldorp (2022) [16] show that police reporting styles influence how crime-related information is later processed, while Ansori (2026) [12] demonstrates that interrogation transcripts are already shaped by speech-act strategies before entering trial discourse. This study therefore extends earlier work by locating credibility not only in courtroom interaction, but in transitions among procedural texts. The implication is methodological as much as legal: analysing criminal credibility requires attention to textual movement across records, not merely to testimonial content. Credibility is structurally dependent on recontextualization.

The pattern of narrative consistency has a different implication: credibility is organized through relational alignment rather than isolated testimony. Corroborative alignment, investigation-trial continuity, event-sequence stabilization, and documentary support show that testimony becomes stronger when courts can connect it to other voices, records, objects, or procedural sequences. This supports evidentiary logic under Indonesian criminal procedure, where testimony gains force through compatibility with other lawful evidence. Yet the same pattern also exposes a dysfunction. If consistency becomes too privileged, courts may treat orderly narration as more reliable than fragmented but truthful recollection. Arce et al. (2023) [7] and Verschuere et al. (2025) [8] caution that memory is reconstructive, and consistency should not be equated with truthfulness. This study therefore suggests that consistency is best understood as an evidentiary relation, not a psychological guarantee. Its value lies in comparison; its risk lies in overinterpretation.

This emphasis on consistency arises from the structure of criminal proof itself. A criminal judgment must organize multiple accounts into a legally intelligible narrative of time, place, actor, act, and evidentiary sufficiency. That demand encourages courts to privilege statements that can be sequenced, corroborated, and made compatible with prior records. Jacobs and Maryns (2021) [9] show that legal institutions often expect vulnerable speakers to present coherent narratives that fit procedural categories, even when lived experience is less orderly. Indonesian studies on *de auditu* testimony, verbal witnesses, child witnesses, and discrepancies between investigation and trial testimony similarly show that credibility is filtered through procedural form as well as substance (Damanik et al., 2021 [1]; Syahyu, 2023 [20]; Isnawanti et al., 2026 [22]; Malamassam & Arif, 2026 [24]). This explains why inconsistency in this study is not simply a defect; it is a problem that the court must classify, limit, repair, or contextualize.

The judicial credibility pattern adds a further implication: courts do not merely accept or reject testimony, but assign degrees of evidentiary uptake. Acceptance as corroborative evidence, chronological stabilization, material support, partial qualification, and credibility weakening all show that judicial evaluation operates through graded legal use. This finding supports Chalmers et al. (2022) [4], Denault et al. (2023) [5], and Denault and Talwar (2024) [6], who warn against intuitive credibility assessment based on demeanour, because testimonial reliability is better examined through evidentiary structure than through surface impressions. It also aligns with Setiawan (2026) [13] and Sadani (2026) [14], who treat criminal verdicts and judicial reasoning as institutional language practices. The function of graded uptake is fairness: it allows courts to use reliable portions of testimony without treating every discrepancy as fatal. The dysfunction is selectivity, because partial acceptance may obscure how institutional authority decides which fragments survive.

This graded uptake is linked to the hierarchy of legal authority inside criminal records. Judges occupy the final position in transforming narrated events into legal facts, but they do so through available evidentiary categories, procedural rules, and institutional expectations. Expert testimony, documentary evidence, oath

status, direct perception, and witness corroboration shape how testimonial statements are weighted. Butt and Nathaniel (2023) [2] show that expert evidence in Indonesian trials may raise concerns about judicial function, while Maham (2026) [17] and Williams and Jobe (2024) [27] remind us that credibility can be affected by gendered, institutional, or disability-related barriers. This study does not claim that judicial evaluation is arbitrary; rather, it shows that credibility is mediated by unequal access to authoritative forms of speech. The broader theoretical contribution is therefore a record-based account of credibility: criminal truth is not simply narrated, but institutionally filtered, formatted, and authorized.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that credibility in Indonesian criminal proceedings is not merely a quality possessed by witnesses, defendants, or experts, but a record-based construction produced through reported speech, narrative alignment, and judicial uptake. Its most important lesson is that testimony becomes legally persuasive only after being attributed, compressed, compared, and inserted into evidentiary reasoning. By treating testimonial-evaluative segments as the unit of analysis, this study renews forensic legal discourse research by shifting attention from testimony as content to testimony as institutional record. Its contribution lies in integrating reported speech analysis, narrative consistency, and credibility evaluation into one methodologically coherent framework.

This study remains limited by its reliance on publicly accessible criminal records and selected textual segments, which cannot fully capture courtroom interaction, tone, gesture, questioning pressure, or undocumented interpretive practices. The analysis also does not claim causal influence between linguistic form and judicial decision, because the design is documentary and interpretive. Future research should expand the corpus across court levels, offence types, and regions, while incorporating courtroom transcripts, audio-visual records, lawyer questioning, interpreter mediation, and comparative judicial reasoning. Further mixed-method work could examine how judges, prosecutors, advocates, and witnesses understand credibility, thereby connecting textual patterns with institutional practice.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author thanks the reviewers and editorial team for their constructive feedback on this manuscript.

## FUNDING INFORMATION

Author states no funding involved.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

**Nor Mohammad Abdoeh:** conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Author states no conflict of interest.

## AI USE DECLARATION

The author used artificial intelligence tools to assist with the generation of illustrative figures and with the formatting and layout of this manuscript. AI was not used to generate the substantive content, conceptualization, data, analysis, or conclusions of the research, all of which remain the sole responsibility of the author.

## INFORMED CONSENT

Not applicable – this study did not involve direct human participants. Data consisted solely of publicly accessible Indonesian criminal judgment records, legal-context documents, and secondary scholarly sources.

## ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research did not involve human or animal subjects; it analyzed publicly accessible Indonesian criminal judgment records, legal-context documents, and secondary scholarly sources, and therefore no institutional review board approval was required. Where research does involve human subjects, the author affirms that such research would be conducted in full compliance with all relevant national regulations and institutional policies, in accordance with the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki, and would be approved by the author's institutional review board or equivalent committee.

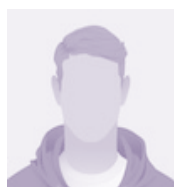
## DATA AVAILABILITY

The corpus of publicly accessible Indonesian criminal judgment records, legal-context documents, and scholarly materials analyzed in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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