

From legal assistance to automated authority: a critical discourse analysis of generative AI in Indonesian digital legal services

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ABSTRACT

Background: Indonesia's expanding digital legal-service ecosystem has brought generative AI into public-facing legal assistance, yet its authority is increasingly produced through platform discourse before its professional, ethical, and regulatory boundaries are fully settled. **Objective:** This study aims to examine how generative AI is represented in Indonesian digital legal services and how such representation shifts AI from a tool of legal assistance toward a form of automated authority. **Method:** Using critical discourse analysis, this study analyses 27 publicly accessible documents consisting of platform pages, app descriptions, professional media articles, legal-policy documents, and regulatory-context materials. **Results:** Findings show that AI authority is constructed through professional research vocabulary, efficiency claims, innovation narratives, access-to-justice language, and references to regulatory accountability. Findings also indicate that users are positioned as self-service legal actors whose access to law is mediated by platform interfaces, automated summaries, guided consultation, and document-generation tools. **Implication:** Findings further reveal that accountability is unevenly articulated, with legal responsibility often dispersed across professionals, users, ethical soft regulation, data-protection discourse, and platform claims. **Novelty:** The novelty of this study lies in shifting Indonesian AI-law scholarship from adoption and regulation debates toward the discursive production of automated legal authority.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's legal services are entering a digital environment in which access to legal knowledge is increasingly mediated by platforms, search interfaces, automated templates, and generative AI. This transformation matters because it emerges at the intersection of high digital connectivity and persistent inequality in legal access. APJII reported 221,563,479 internet users in Indonesia in 2024, with national internet penetration reaching 79.5%, indicating that digital channels have become a major infrastructure for public information-seeking. At the same time, formal legal assistance remains institutionally limited: BPHN reported that 597 legal aid providers were undergoing re-accreditation for the 2025–2027 period. These figures show a structural tension. Digital legal services may broaden access to legal information, yet they may also relocate legal authority from licensed professionals and public institutions to automated systems. The crucial issue is therefore not only whether AI helps users, but how it becomes authorised to speak in legal terms.

Existing scholarship has examined AI in Indonesian law primarily through regulation, professional disruption, public service innovation, and access to justice. Studies discuss generative AI in smart government and public service reform [1], AI policy in Indonesia's decentralised governance system [2], free legal aid applications [3], semantic AI for civil-law literacy [4], and the changing legal profession under AI integration [5], [6]. Other works examine legal ethics, automated decision-making, robot lawyers, and AI regulation [7], [8], [9]. These studies establish that AI has become a legal, institutional, and ethical concern in Indonesia. However, they pay less attention to discourse itself: how digital legal services linguistically construct AI as helpful, neutral, expert, efficient, or authoritative. This gap matters because authority in law is not only institutional; it is also produced through language, framing, genre, and claims of expertise.

This study addresses that gap by analysing how generative AI is represented in Indonesian digital legal service discourse and how such representation shifts AI from legal assistance toward automated authority. It asks three related questions. First, how do Indonesian digital legal services describe the role, capability, and reliability of generative AI in relation to legal information and legal problem-solving? Second, what forms of professional authority, institutional legitimacy, user responsibility, and accountability are constructed through this discourse? Third, how do these texts negotiate the boundary between assistance, advice, and authoritative legal interpretation? To answer these questions, this study uses critical discourse analysis, supported by concepts of legal language, power, plain legal communication, and algorithmic accountability. CDA is suitable because the object is not merely technological adoption but the discursive production of legitimacy. The focus is therefore on textual and multimodal evidence from publicly accessible legal service platforms, official documents, media materials, and contextual regulatory sources.

The central argument is that generative AI in Indonesian digital legal services is unlikely to be framed only as a passive tool. Its discourse may instead organise a gradual movement from assistance to authority by combining access-to-justice language, efficiency claims, professional vocabulary, and technological neutrality. This does not mean that AI already replaces lawyers, judges, or legal aid institutions. Rather, this study examines how platform discourse can make automated outputs appear competent, immediate, and institutionally trustworthy before questions of responsibility are fully settled. This argument connects legal discourse studies on power and justice [10], [11], plain legal language [12], and intertextual interaction between AI ethics and legal discourse [13]. Its implication is methodological as well as normative: evaluating AI in legal services requires attention not only to accuracy or regulation, but also to the language through which automated systems acquire legal credibility in public-facing environments.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Digital legal services

Digital legal services refer to platform-based arrangements through which legal information, document preparation, consultation, research, or dispute-related support is delivered through digital interfaces. In Indonesian scholarship, this concept is often discussed as either an access-to-justice mechanism or a professional disruption. The first view emphasises affordability, speed, and public legal literacy, as seen in studies on AI-based legal aid and semantic civil-law access [3], [4]. The second view treats digital legal services as a reconfiguration of legal work, professional boundaries, and client-lawyer relations [5], [8], [14]. These positions show that digital legal services are not merely technical channels but institutional spaces where legal expertise is reorganised.

The key dimensions of digital legal services include accessibility, automation, professional mediation, regulatory compliance, and user responsibility. Accessibility concerns whether platforms expand legal knowledge for non-expert users, while automation concerns the extent to which forms, searches, explanations, or recommendations are generated without direct professional intervention. Professional mediation remains central because legal services cannot be reduced to information delivery; they also involve interpretation, ethical judgement, and responsibility. Indonesian studies on smart government, e-litigation, decentralised AI policy, and legal profession regulation highlight this tension between innovation and institutional accountability [1], [15], [2], [6]. Thus, digitalisation must be read through service design and legal authority together.

2.2. Generative AI

Generative AI introduces a sharper conceptual problem because it does not only retrieve legal information; it produces language that may resemble legal reasoning. Earlier discussions of automated decision-making in Indonesia framed AI as an object of regulation and accountability [7], while recent studies examine its implications for legal ethics, case analysis, and professional practice [9], [16], [17]. Cheng and Liu (2023) [13] further show that AI ethical discourse and legal discourse interact intertextually, rather than developing in isolation. This matters for digital legal services because generative AI may appear conversational, responsive, and authoritative even when its legal status, reliability, and responsibility remain unsettled.

The relevant indicators of automated authority include delegation, opacity, linguistic certainty, institutional borrowing, and accountability displacement. Delegation occurs when users are encouraged to rely on automated outputs for legal understanding. Opacity appears when platforms foreground results but obscure data sources, model limitations, or professional review. Linguistic certainty is produced through confident modal expressions, simplified answers, and solution-oriented framing. Regulatory studies on digital rights, personal data protection, human rights, civil justice, and small claims reform show that AI authority cannot be separated from risk allocation [18], [19], [20], [21], [22]. The issue is therefore how responsibility is discursively distributed when machines speak legal language.

2.3. Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis provides the theoretical route for examining this distribution of authority. Foundationally, CDA treats discourse as a site where power, knowledge, and institutional legitimacy are produced rather than simply reflected [23], [24], [25]. This approach is especially relevant to legal language because law depends on specialised forms of classification, reasoning, and authorised speech. Indonesian legal-linguistic studies have examined power in anti-corruption law, judicial reasoning, plain legal drafting, forensic evidence, interrogation, and language rights [10], [11], [12], [26], [27], [28]. Together, these studies show that legal authority is linguistically constructed through genre, role, procedure, and institutional voice.

For this study, the most relevant CDA indicators are representation, legitimation, modality, intertextuality, user positioning, and accountability framing. Representation concerns how AI is named: assistant, tool, expert, platform, solution, or legal companion. Legitimation concerns how its authority is justified through efficiency, access, expertise, state policy, or technological inevitability. Modality reveals the degree of certainty attached to AI-generated claims, while intertextuality shows how platform discourse borrows from law, ethics, public service, and innovation narratives. This position extends Indonesian AI-law scholarship by shifting attention from whether AI should be regulated to how generative AI is discursively authorised within digital legal services [29], [30], [13].

3. METHOD

The unit of analysis in this study is public-facing discourse on generative AI and automation in Indonesian digital legal services. The material object consists of platform pages, product descriptions, app-store listings, media articles, official legal-information websites, regulatory documents, and policy statements collected from publicly accessible sources. Each item is treated as a document-level unit, while relevant clauses, phrases, visual elements, and interface claims are treated as embedded analytical units. This structure allows this study to examine not only what platforms and institutions say about AI, but also how legal assistance, expertise, access, and accountability are discursively arranged across different public genres.

This study uses qualitative critical discourse analysis with a corpus-assisted organisational logic. It is not designed to measure technical accuracy, user satisfaction, or causal effects of generative AI adoption. Instead, it examines how AI is represented, legitimised, and bounded within digital legal-service discourse. CDA is appropriate because legal authority is produced through institutional language, genre, modality, intertextuality, and claims of expertise. The design follows the assumption that platform discourse does not merely describe technology; it actively organises relations among users, professionals, institutions, and automated systems. This makes discourse a legitimate site for analysing the movement from assistance to authority.

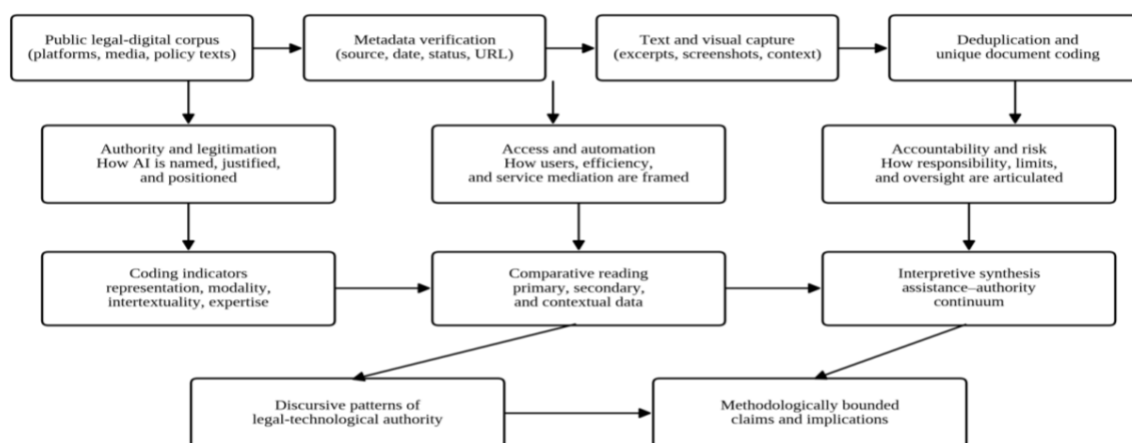


Figure 1. Operational matrix of analysis

Table 1. Composition of dataset

Code	Data Type	Source	Location	Period	Number	Characteristics
PRI-01	Platform discourse	AI legal research/product pages	Indonesia	2023–2026	2	AI-based legal research and professional legal database services
PRI-02	Platform discourse	Hukumku/Legal Hero website, blog, app listing	Indonesia/Jakarta	2023–2026	3	AI contextual search, automatic summaries, practitioner-oriented legal workflow
PRI-03	Platform discourse	Justika service pages	Indonesia	2023–2026	2	Online legal consultation and automated legal-document service
PRI-04	Government digital legal information	JDIH Komdigi	Indonesia/Jakarta	2023–2026	1	AI-based legal-document search in public legal-information infrastructure
SEC-01	Media discourse	Hukumonline AI launch and innovation articles	Indonesia	2023–2026	5	Public framing of AI as pioneer, innovation, navigation, and legal research tool
SEC-02	Professional discourse	Hukumonline articles on lawyers, ethics, and AI literacy	Indonesia	2023–2026	5	Professional adaptation, legitimacy, critical reasoning, and ethical awareness
SEC-03	Consumer/legaltech discourse	Public legaltech article and Legal Hero launch media	Indonesia	2023–2026	2	LegalTech, consumer access, platform visibility, and practitioner efficiency
CTX-01	Regulatory and policy context	Komdigi AI circular and AI policy statements	Indonesia	2023–2026	3	Ethical AI governance, soft regulation, and public-service AI adoption
CTX-02	Legal framework	PDP Law, Legal Aid Law, ITE Law, PSTE Regulation	Indonesia	2011–2024	4	Legal context for data protection, legal aid, digital services, and electronic systems
TOTAL	Corpus	Public legal-digital discourse	Indonesia	2011–2026	27	Primary, secondary, and contextual sources

The information sources were selected because they represent different positions in Indonesia's emerging AI-legal ecosystem. Primary data were drawn from official platform and institutional pages that directly present digital legal services, AI-based legal research, automated document preparation, or legal-information search. Secondary data were drawn from public media and professional articles that frame AI adoption, legal innovation, professional ethics, and lawyer adaptation. Contextual data were drawn from legal and policy documents relevant to data protection, legal aid, electronic systems, and AI governance. This three-layer source structure enables this study to separate platform self-representation from external public framing and broader regulatory context.

Data collection followed a documented search, screening, extraction, and deduplication procedure. Searches used combinations of Indonesian and English keywords, including “AI hukum Indonesia,” “generative AI hukum,” “legal tech Indonesia,” “riset hukum berbasis AI,” “bantuan hukum digital,” “AI lawyer Indonesia,” and “JDIH berbasis AI.” Items were included when they were publicly accessible, relevant to Indonesian digital legal services, and connected to AI, automation, legal information, legal assistance, or professional legal practice. Items were excluded when they were duplicates, inaccessible beyond unverifiable fragments, unrelated to legal services, or purely technical without legal-service discourse. Each retained item received a unique document code and metadata record.

Data analysis proceeded in three stages. First, documents were coded descriptively by source type, genre, audience, platform function, and legal-service orientation. Second, interpretive coding examined representation, modality, legitimation, intertextuality, user positioning, professional authority, and accountability framing. Third, cross-source comparison identified how assistance, access, expertise, efficiency, responsibility, and risk were patterned across primary, secondary, and contextual data. The

analytical procedure draws on CDA traditions associated with discourse, power, and institutional legitimacy, while adapting them to Indonesian legal-linguistic and AI-law scholarship. Claims are therefore restricted to discursive construction, not to the actual legal validity or technical performance of AI systems.

4. RESULTS

4.1. From assisted search to authoritative legal answers

Across Indonesian digital legal-service discourse, generative AI is positioned less as a detached computational instrument than as a discursive carrier of legal-technological authority. The point is not that automated systems are presented as formal legal actors, but that their authority is gradually assembled through professional vocabulary, efficiency claims, regulatory language, and access-to-justice framing. This pattern corresponds with recent scholarship on AI and legal services, which shows that AI adoption is often justified through innovation, service improvement, and institutional adaptation rather than through explicit claims of legal replacement [1], [3], [4], [6]. Thus, this study reads authority as a discursive achievement, not as a fixed institutional status.

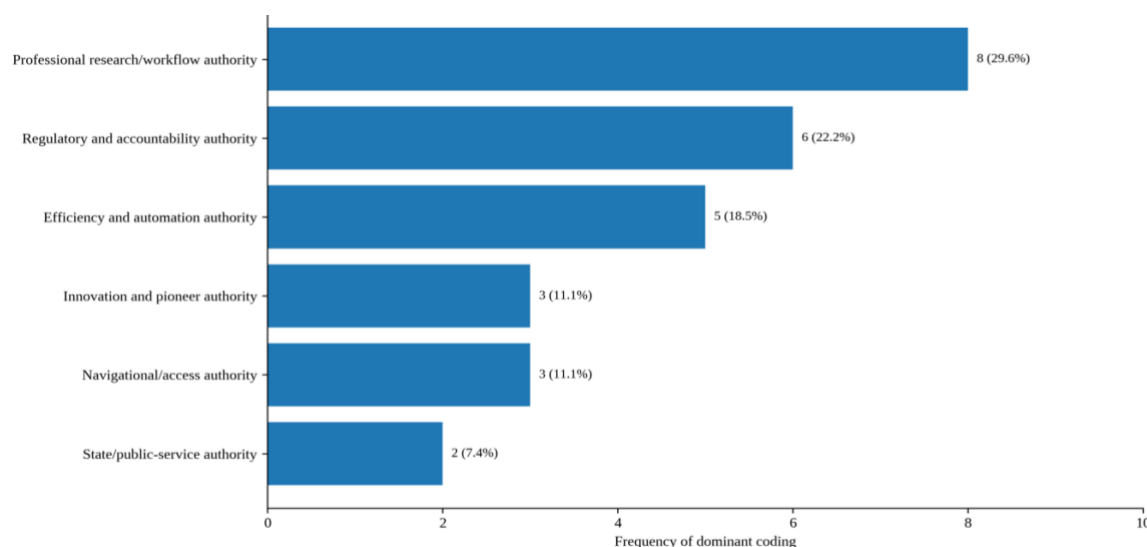


Figure 2. Dominant authority positioning in Indonesian digital legal-service discourse

The dominant pattern appears in professional research and workflow authority, which accounts for 8 of 27 documents, or 29.6%. Regulatory and accountability authority follows with 6 documents, or 22.2%, while efficiency and automation authority appears in 5 documents, or 18.5%. Innovation, access, and public-service framings are less frequent but analytically important because they provide supporting vocabularies through which AI becomes socially acceptable. The corpus therefore does not present a single story of technological disruption. It distributes AI authority across professional work, regulatory context, consumer access, and public-service modernisation. This distribution is consistent with Indonesian AI-law scholarship that treats AI as simultaneously a regulatory problem, professional challenge, and access-to-justice opportunity [2], [7], [5].

Theoretically, these patterns suggest that automated authority is produced through interdiscursive accumulation. Professional authority borrows from legal expertise; efficiency borrows from managerial rationality; innovation borrows from technological progress; and accountability borrows from regulatory language. This finding aligns with critical discourse approaches that treat authority as constructed through representation, modality, legitimation, and institutional voice, rather than merely possessed by actors [23], [24], [25]. It also extends legal-discourse studies in Indonesia by showing how legal power can be redistributed through platform language and automated service design [10], [12], [11]. This study therefore positions generative AI as a discourse-mediated authority formation within Indonesian digital legal services.

Table 2. Automated authority in Indonesian digital legal-service discourse

Subcategory	Indicator	Frequency	Percentage	Data Variation	Example / Excerpt	Data Code
AI as legal research infrastructure and professional competence	AI is framed as a tool for lawyers, in-house counsel, academics, or legal practitioners	8	29.6%	Product pages, app listing, professional media articles	“platform AI hukum”; “mudahkan akademisi dan praktisi”; “melek teknologi dan etika”	DOC-PRI-002; DOC-PRI-005; DOC-SEC-003; DOC-SEC-006; DOC-SEC-007; DOC-SEC-008; DOC-SEC-009; DOC-SEC-010
AI as an object of legal, ethical, and institutional governance	AI is positioned through data protection, legal aid, electronic systems, ethics, and soft regulation	6	22.2%	Ministerial circular, policy discourse, legislation pages	“soft regulation”; “hak subjek data pribadi”; “syarat dan tata cara permohonan Bantuan Hukum”	DOC-CTX-001; DOC-CTX-002; DOC-CTX-004; DOC-CTX-005; DOC-CTX-006; DOC-CTX-007
AI as acceleration, automatic summary, and document production	AI is legitimised through speed, simplification, automation, and workflow compression	5	18.5%	Legal research products, document-template services, LegalTech media	“Riset Hukum 3x Lebih Cepat”; “ringkasan otomatis berbasis AI”; “dokumen langsung jadi”; “10x lebih efisien”	DOC-PRI-001; DOC-PRI-003; DOC-PRI-004; DOC-PRI-006; DOC-SEC-012
AI as first mover, novelty, and technological breakthrough	AI is described as new, pioneering, generative, or game-changing	3	11.1%	Launch articles and innovation discourse	“pionir kecerdasan buatan generatif”; “inovasi baru riset hukum”; “game changer”	DOC-SEC-001; DOC-SEC-002; DOC-SEC-004
AI and LegalTech as assistance for users facing legal complexity	AI is framed as guidance, access, consultation, or consumer-oriented legal support	3	11.1%	Consultation homepage, LegalTech consumer article, regulatory-navigation article	“konsultasi hukum online”; “navigasi regulasi”; “LegalTech dibantu oleh AI”	DOC-PRI-007; DOC-SEC-005; DOC-SEC-011
AI as part of official legal-information and public-service infrastructure	AI is linked to government legal information and public-sector modernisation	2	7.4%	Official JDIH site and public-service AI policy discourse	“Berbasis Artificial Intelligence (AI)”; “Pemerintah Adopsi AI untuk Layanan Publik”	DOC-PRI-008; DOC-CTX-003

4.2. Access, efficiency, and professional mediation in digital legal services

Digital legal-service discourse in Indonesia positions users through a double movement: they are made more independent as digital legal subjects, yet their independence is structured by platforms, professional vocabularies, and automated interfaces. The point is not that users are fully empowered or fully displaced by technology, but that access is discursively reorganised as a platform-mediated activity. This is consistent with studies that frame AI and LegalTech as instruments for improving legal aid, public-service delivery, and civil-law literacy [3], [1], [4]. In this corpus, however, access is never merely about availability. It is tied to assumptions about who can understand law, who needs guidance, and who bears responsibility when automated outputs are used.

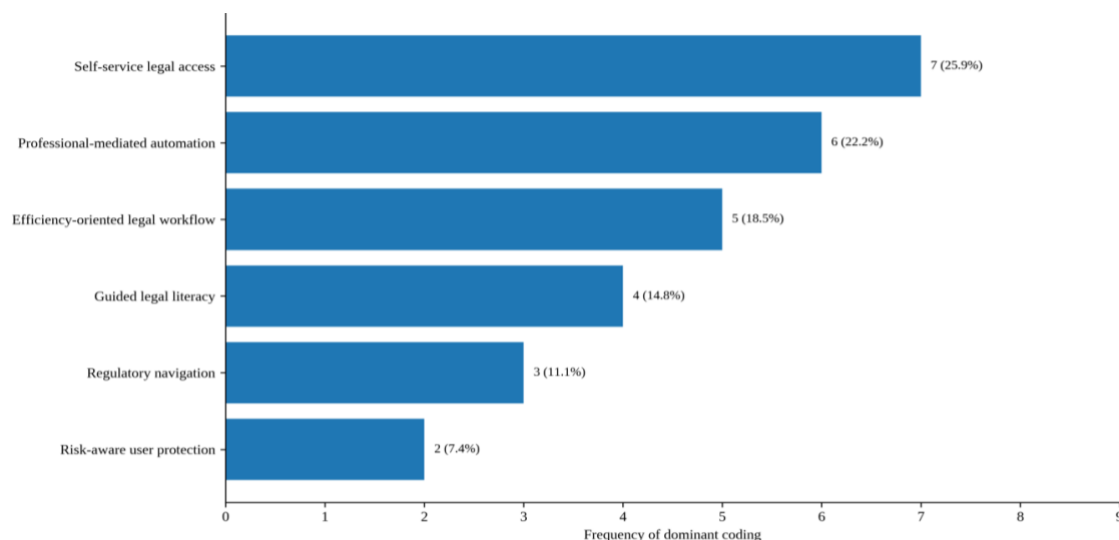


Figure 3. User positioning and service automation in Indonesian digital legal-service discourse

The most frequent pattern is self-service legal access, appearing in 7 of 27 documents, or 25.9%. Professional-mediated automation follows with 6 documents, or 22.2%, while efficiency-oriented workflow appears in 5 documents, or 18.5%. These three categories account for two-thirds of the corpus, showing that digital legal services are primarily framed through access, professional support, and time-saving automation. Guided legal literacy, regulatory navigation, and risk-aware user protection appear less frequently, but they are analytically significant because they show how legal complexity, public understanding, and user vulnerability are acknowledged. The distribution suggests that digital legal-service discourse privileges usability and efficiency more strongly than explicit discussion of rights, limits, or accountability.

Theoretically, this pattern indicates that access-to-justice discourse is being partially rearticulated through platform rationality. Legal access is not represented only as institutional entitlement or professional assistance; it is increasingly framed as an interface-based capacity to search, generate, consult, and act. This aligns with scholarship on AI-based legal aid and digital legal transformation, but it also exposes a critical tension: the more platforms promise accessible legal understanding, the more they must manage the boundary between information, advice, and authority [5], [15], [6]. This study therefore treats user positioning as a central mechanism through which automated legal authority becomes socially acceptable.

Table 3. Access, automation, and user positioning in digital legal services

Subcategory	Indicator	Frequency	Percentage	Data Variation	Example / Excerpt	Data Code
User as independent legal information seeker	Legal services are framed as directly accessible through digital platforms without requiring immediate professional mediation	7	25.9%	Platform pages, app listings, legal consultation pages, consumer-facing media	“konsultasi hukum online”; “dokumen langsung jadi”; “akses informasi hukum”	DOC-PRI-003; DOC-PRI-004; DOC-PRI-006; DOC-PRI-007; DOC-SEC-005; DOC-SEC-011; DOC-CTX-004
User assisted by lawyers, legal experts, or professional infrastructure	Automation is presented as supporting legal professionals rather than replacing them	6	22.2%	Professional media, AI legal research pages, legal ethics articles	“praktisi hukum”; “lawyer harus melek teknologi”; “legal research platform”	DOC-PRI-001; DOC-PRI-002; DOC-SEC-006; DOC-SEC-007; DOC-SEC-008; DOC-SEC-010
User as time-conscious legal-service consumer	AI and digital services are legitimised through speed, simplification, and reduced procedural burden	5	18.5%	AI product claims, document-template pages, LegalTech media	“3x lebih cepat”; “10x lebih efisien”; “ringkasan otomatis”	DOC-PRI-005; DOC-SEC-001; DOC-SEC-002; DOC-SEC-003; DOC-SEC-012
User as legally under-informed but improvable subject	Platforms and public discourse frame legal technology as a means of improving understanding, awareness, or literacy	4	14.8%	Civil-law access discourse, legal aid context, media explainers	“legal literacy”; “bantuan hukum”; “memudahkan masyarakat memahami hukum”	DOC-SEC-004; DOC-SEC-009; DOC-CTX-005; DOC-CTX-006
User as actor navigating complex legal and administrative systems	AI is linked to searching, filtering, or navigating regulatory materials and legal documents	3	11.1%	JDIH, regulatory-search discourse, public legal information	“JDIH berbasis Artificial Intelligence”; “navigasi regulasi”; “dokumen hukum”	DOC-PRI-008; DOC-CTX-001; DOC-CTX-003
User as rights-bearing and vulnerable digital subject	Digital legal services are connected to privacy, accountability, ethics, and electronic-system governance	2	7.4%	Data-protection law and AI ethics policy context	“pelindungan data pribadi”; “etika kecerdasan artifisial”	DOC-CTX-002; DOC-CTX-007

4.3. Accountability gaps in automated legal authority

The movement from legal assistance to automated authority becomes most visible when accountability is examined. Digital legal-service discourse frequently foregrounds usefulness, speed, accessibility, and professional relevance, but it less consistently specifies who bears responsibility when automated legal information is inaccurate, incomplete, or misunderstood. This pattern is important because legal services differ from ordinary information services: they operate in contexts where interpretation can affect rights, obligations, procedural decisions, and professional duties. Indonesian scholarship on AI regulation, legal ethics, judicial technology, and professional responsibility has already identified accountability as a central challenge in AI adoption [7], [9], [6], [20]. In this corpus, accountability appears not as a single rule but as a fragmented discourse.

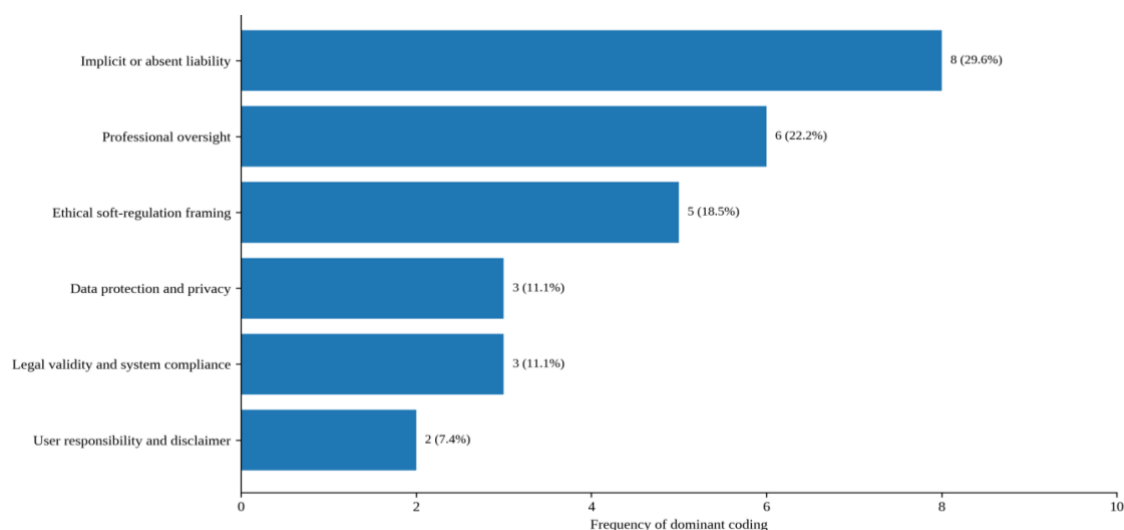


Figure 4. Accountability and risk framing in Indonesian digital legal-service discourse

The dominant category is implicit or absent liability, appearing in 8 of 27 documents, or 29.6%. Professional oversight follows with 6 documents, or 22.2%, while ethical soft-regulation framing appears in 5 documents, or 18.5%. Data protection, legal validity, and user responsibility are present but less frequent. This distribution shows that risk is not absent from Indonesian digital legal-service discourse, but it is unevenly articulated. Responsibility is most often stabilised indirectly through professional expertise, ethical language, or regulatory context rather than through explicit platform-level accountability. The pattern also shows that data protection has become a recognisable risk vocabulary, but it cannot by itself resolve questions of legal accuracy, advice, reliance, or professional liability.

Theoretically, this pattern supports the argument that automated authority is sustained by an accountability gap between discursive confidence and institutional responsibility. The discourse legitimises AI by borrowing from professional, regulatory, ethical, and access-to-justice vocabularies, but these vocabularies do not always converge into a clear accountability structure. This finding extends studies on AI in Indonesian law by shifting attention from whether AI should be regulated to how responsibility is linguistically distributed before regulation becomes settled [2], [18], [19], [21]. For this study, accountability is therefore not treated as an external legal issue only, but as a discursive condition under which automated legal authority becomes publicly credible.

Table 4. Accountability, risk, and the limits of automated legal authority

Subcategory	Indicator	Frequency	Percentage	Data Variation	Example / Excerpt	Data Code
Responsibility not clearly assigned	AI capacity, speed, or usefulness is foregrounded without an equally explicit account of who is responsible for error, misuse, or legal misunderstanding	8	29.6%	Platform pages, innovation articles, legaltech media	“AI legal research”; “game changer”; “dokumen langsung jadi”; “riset hukum lebih cepat”	DOC-PRI-001; DOC-PRI-003; DOC-PRI-004; DOC-SEC-001; DOC-SEC-002; DOC-SEC-003; DOC-SEC-004; DOC-SEC-012
Responsibility mediated through legal professionals	Human legal expertise is invoked as a safeguard, reviewer, user, or professional context for AI-supported legal work	6	22.2%	Professional media, lawyer-oriented articles, legal research platforms	“praktisi hukum”; “lawyer harus melek teknologi”; “profesi hukum”	DOC-PRI-002; DOC-PRI-005; DOC-SEC-006; DOC-SEC-007; DOC-SEC-008; DOC-SEC-010
AI governed through ethical principles and institutional guidance	AI is discussed through ethics, policy guidance, governance, public service, or institutional responsibility rather than binding technical standards	5	18.5%	Ministerial circular, policy discourse, public-service AI materials	“etika kecerdasan artifisial”; “good governance”; “layanan publik”	DOC-CTX-001; DOC-CTX-003; DOC-CTX-006; DOC-CTX-007; DOC-SEC-009
User as data subject	Risk is framed through personal data, electronic systems, and protection of users’ digital rights	3	11.1%	PDP Law, digital-rights discourse, electronic-system regulation	“pelindungan data pribadi”; “hak subjek data”; “penyelenggara sistem elektronik”	DOC-CTX-002; DOC-CTX-004; DOC-CTX-005
AI situated within formal legal-system requirements	Discourse links automation to validity, evidential status, electronic information, legal aid, or procedural compliance	3	11.1%	Legal aid law, ITE framework, civil/legal validity discussions	“bantuan hukum”; “informasi elektronik”; “keabsahan”	DOC-CTX-008; DOC-SEC-011; DOC-SEC-005
User expected to interpret limits of service	Responsibility is shifted partly to users through implied caution, consultation boundaries, or the need for further legal advice	2	7.4%	Consultation pages, consumer legaltech materials	“konsultasi”; “hubungi ahli hukum”; “panduan”	DOC-PRI-006; DOC-PRI-007

5. DISCUSSION

The first implication of this study is that generative AI in Indonesian digital legal services functions as more than a technical supplement to legal work. Its authority is produced through a discursive alignment between professional competence, workflow efficiency, and technological credibility. This matters because legal authority is not only created by statutes, courts, or licensed professionals, but also by the language through which particular actors become recognisable as legitimate sources of legal knowledge. The corpus shows that AI is frequently attached to legal research, professional workflow, and institutional efficiency, rather than being openly framed as a replacement for lawyers. This supports studies that describe AI as transforming legal practice without necessarily abolishing professional mediation [5], [6], [8]. However, this study adds that such transformation occurs discursively before it becomes formally institutionalised. The functional consequence is legitimacy; the possible dysfunction is quiet normalisation of machine-generated legal authority.

This pattern emerges because Indonesian AI-legal discourse sits within a broader structure of professional modernisation, regulatory uncertainty, and digital-service competition. Legal platforms need to present AI as useful enough to attract users, yet not so autonomous that it appears to violate professional or ethical boundaries. This explains why authority is often constructed through hybrid language: AI is described as fast, intelligent, contextual, and useful, but also linked to lawyers, legal databases, or public legal information. The structure is therefore not one of simple technological substitution. It is a negotiated arrangement in which automation borrows credibility from existing legal institutions. This finding partially supports Alamsyah and Aryfiyanto's (2025) [1] account of generative AI as public-service innovation, but it complicates innovation-centred readings by showing that innovation also requires legitimisation. The underlying structure is a discursive compromise: AI becomes authoritative by appearing professionally embedded, not institutionally independent.

The second implication concerns access to justice. Digital legal-service discourse presents users as more capable of finding, understanding, and initiating legal action through platform-mediated tools. This is functionally significant because Indonesia's legal aid infrastructure and professional legal services cannot fully meet diverse public needs across geography, class, and legal literacy. AI-assisted search, online consultation, and automated document preparation may therefore appear as practical responses to legal exclusion. This aligns with Hakim et al. (2024) [3] and Rozaq et al. (2025) [4], who frame AI-supported legal services as potentially expanding legal aid and civil-law literacy. Yet this study shows that access is not neutral. It is constructed through interface logic, simplified pathways, and user self-service. The dysfunction is that legal access may shift from a rights-based institutional relation to a platform-managed consumer activity.

The structure behind this pattern lies in the convergence between access-to-justice discourse and platform rationality. Access-to-justice scholarship usually foregrounds institutional barriers, affordability, procedural complexity, and the need for professional assistance. Platform discourse, by contrast, tends to translate these barriers into problems of speed, usability, searchability, and workflow. This explains why the corpus repeatedly links access with automation and efficiency. Legal complexity becomes something to be navigated through interfaces, summaries, templates, and guided consultation. This pattern supports Sitepu and Hasnda's (2024) [15] concern with e-litigation, procedural justice, and digital access, but it also suggests a broader issue: technological access does not automatically equal legal empowerment. This study therefore treats user positioning as a key discursive mechanism. Users are represented as enabled, but this enabling is conditional on platform design, automated categorisation, and the availability of professional or regulatory safeguards.

The third implication concerns accountability. The most critical issue is not simply that risk is absent, but that responsibility is unevenly distributed across professional oversight, ethical language, privacy regulation, system compliance, and user discretion. This matters because legal services involve consequences that exceed ordinary information retrieval. A misleading legal explanation, inappropriate document template, or overconfident automated answer may affect procedural choices, rights claims, or trust in legal institutions. Previous studies have raised related concerns in relation to automated decision-making, legal ethics, personal data protection, digital rights, and AI regulation [7], [9], [19], [18], [20]. This study contributes by showing that accountability is also a discourse problem. When platforms foreground usefulness more strongly than responsibility, automated authority becomes credible before its limits are fully intelligible.

AI services are promoted through immediacy, innovation, and convenience, while law requires attribution, review, contestability, and professional duty. This structural mismatch explains why ethical soft regulation and professional oversight appear as important but incomplete stabilising vocabularies. They signal responsibility without always specifying enforceable obligations. Wadipalapa et al. (2024) [2] show

that Indonesian AI policy operates within a decentralised governance environment, while Setiawan et al. (2025) [6] emphasise the urgency of regulating legal professions amid AI integration. This study extends these arguments by locating the problem at the level of discourse: accountability is not only delayed by regulatory gaps, but also blurred by the way platforms distribute agency among AI systems, professionals, institutions, and users. Automated authority thus depends on unresolved responsibility.

6. CONCLUSION

This study shows that generative AI in Indonesian digital legal services is discursively constructed through a gradual movement from assistance to automated authority. The most important lesson is that AI does not need to be formally recognised as a legal actor to acquire legal-technological credibility. Its authority is assembled through professional vocabulary, efficiency claims, access-to-justice language, and regulatory references. The strength of this study lies in shifting analysis from the usual question of whether AI should be adopted or regulated toward how AI becomes linguistically authorised in public-facing legal services.

This study is limited by its reliance on publicly accessible platform, media, and policy discourse. It does not measure user behaviour, legal accuracy, professional liability, algorithmic performance, or actual institutional decision-making. Its findings therefore concern discursive construction rather than the practical effects of AI-generated legal assistance. Further research should combine discourse analysis with interviews involving users, lawyers, legal aid providers, platform developers, and regulators. Experimental or audit-based studies could also examine whether AI-generated legal outputs are accurate, understandable, and ethically bounded. Future comparative work across Southeast Asian jurisdictions would help clarify whether automated legal authority follows Indonesian-specific patterns or wider regional LegalTech trajectories.

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Refai: 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 platform pages, app descriptions, and professional media articles.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research did not involve human or animal subjects; it analyzed publicly accessible platform pages, app descriptions, and professional media articles, and therefore no institutional review board approval was required.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The corpus of documents analyzed in this study are publicly accessible and available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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