



The Illusion of Spirituality in Legal Professions: Administrative Reductionism and Notary Appointment Integrity in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The Indonesian Law on Notarial Positions places devotion to God Almighty—the principle of spirituality—as the foremost prerequisite for notary appointment, yet rising notarial malpractice signals a disconnect between this transcendental mandate and substantive professional integrity. This convergent mixed-methods socio-legal study examined how regulatory authorities interpret and verify the spirituality requirement, and how stakeholder perceptions of that verification predict support for reform, within a province on the western seaboard of Indonesia governed by Islamic-Malay customary law. The qualitative strand comprised fifteen in-depth interviews and document analysis across three anonymized clusters; the quantitative strand surveyed 185 legal-profession stakeholders using five validated five-point scales (Cronbach's α 0.81–0.89). Respondents rated administrative reductionism high (mean 4.06, 95% CI 3.97–4.15) and perceived verification adequacy low (mean 2.39, 95% CI 2.28–2.50). Multiple regression explained 60.5% of variance in support for the proposed Spiritual-Integrous Recruitment model ($R^2=0.605$; $F(4,180)=68.84$, $p<0.001$; Cohen's $f^2=1.53$), with administrative reductionism ($\beta=0.312$), living-law integration deficit ($\beta=0.242$), institutional inertia ($\beta=0.216$) and perceived adequacy ($\beta=-0.293$) as significant predictors (all $p<0.001$). Perceived adequacy differed across clusters (ANOVA $F(2,182)=6.90$, $p=0.001$, $\eta^2=0.07$), lowest in the resource-rich semi-urban cluster. Qualitative themes—administrative reductionism, institutional inertia, and disconnect from living law—triangulated the survey. The state secularizes an ethical mandate into a documentary checklist, marginalizing integrity. The study proposes the Spiritual-Integrous Recruitment model, integrating psychometric integrity testing with living-law screening, to convert a dogmatic illusion into a measurable safeguard of legal professionalism.

1. Introduction

The legitimacy of the legal profession rests on moral integrity, and in Indonesia this imperative is constitutionally and statutorily codified. Article 3(a) of the Law on Notarial Positions (Law Number 30 of 2004, as amended by Law Number 2 of 2014) makes devotion to God Almighty—*bertaqwa kepada Tuhan Yang Maha Esa*—the absolute first requirement for appointment as a notary, echoing the First *Sila* of Pancasila as the highest constitutional norm.¹ A notary is a public official

vested with state authority to create authentic deeds, and is therefore bound by a transcendental oath that, in principle, surpasses mere secular compliance.² Across Indonesian public office, religiosity and moral reasoning are repeatedly associated with integrity and resistance to corruption,^{1,3,4} making the spirituality clause more than ceremonial rhetoric.

This study is anchored in two complementary theories. Responsive-law theory holds that mature legal systems must move beyond autonomous, rule-bound

formalism toward substantive justice and morality; an autonomous system treats the spirituality requirement procedurally, whereas a responsive system demands substantive verification of ethical integrity.^{5,6} Legal-pluralism and living-law theory hold that the effectiveness of state law depends on its congruence with indigenous normative orders—here the Malay-Islamic philosophy of *Adat bersendi Syarak* (custom founded on Islamic law).^{7,8} Where the state apparatus operates in a vacuum detached from this living law, regulatory dysfunction follows.⁹

The stakes of this question are considerable. The notary occupies a quasi-public position whose authentic deeds carry perfect evidentiary force, structuring property transfers, corporate formation, inheritance, and contractual security across the economy. When a notary falsifies a deed or colludes in fraud, the harm is not confined to individual victims; it corrodes the evidentiary backbone of civil legal certainty itself.^{2,10} Reports of notarial malpractice, document falsification, and ethical violations have grown in frequency and sophistication, and these are precisely the white-collar harms that a robust ex-ante integrity screen is designed to deter rather than to punish after the fact.^{11,12} The constitutional placement of devotion to God Almighty as the first appointment criterion thus carries a functional, not merely symbolic, logic: it asserts that public legal authority should be entrusted only to those of demonstrable moral fortitude.

These two theories are mutually reinforcing in the notarial context. Responsive-law theory supplies the normative direction of travel—from procedural box-ticking toward substantive moral verification—while living-law theory specifies the cultural resource through which that verification could be made meaningful and legitimate in a Malay-Islamic setting. The philosophy of *Adat bersendi Syarak*, *Syarak bersendi Kitabullah* (custom rests on Islamic law, which rests on the Book of God) frames moral fitness as a communal and transcendental matter, not a private one, and therefore furnishes an indigenous logic of peer and customary accountability that the state could harness.^{8,13} Where prior comparative work shows that religiosity and moral reasoning relate to professional misconduct,¹⁴ the question becomes institutional: how to translate a

culturally salient moral expectation into an administrable selection instrument.

Prior scholarship has mapped the normative contours of notarial liability and supervision, linking ethical violations to weak accountability and progressive-law deficits.^{2,10} Empirical work shows that notarial misconduct tracks the absence of substantive character evaluation,¹¹ that compliance frameworks underdetermine ethical decision-making,¹⁵ and that organizational culture and institutional inertia—not isolated dispositions—drive deviancy in public institutions.^{5,16} Meta-analytic evidence further establishes that structured integrity tests validly predict counterproductive behaviour with limited adverse impact.^{17,18}

Despite this, a critical void persists: there is little empirical, psychometrically grounded evidence on how the state operationally verifies a candidate's spirituality during recruitment and appointment, nor on how stakeholders perceive that verification. Existing studies remain predominantly doctrinal,^{2,10} leaving the implementation gap between transcendental mandate and bureaucratic practice undocumented in a setting with strong transcendental cultural roots.¹⁹ Equally absent is evidence on whether the profession itself regards the prevailing verification as adequate, and whether dissatisfaction translates into demand for specific, administrable reforms. Without such evidence, debate over the spirituality clause has remained normative and inconclusive, oscillating between defenders of its symbolic constitutional weight and critics who dismiss it as unenforceable—an impasse that empirical measurement can help to break.

This study addresses that gap through a convergent mixed-methods socio-legal design in a confidential western-Indonesian province deeply governed by *Adat bersendi Syarak*. If the spirituality principle fails even where transcendental culture is strongest, the flaw lies in national regulatory design rather than local culture. The study contributes a diagnostic construct—administrative reductionism—and an empirically grounded reform, the Spiritual-Integrous Recruitment (SIR) model. We aimed to (i) characterize how authorities interpret and verify the spirituality requirement, (ii) quantify stakeholder perceptions of reductionism,

inertia, living-law deficit and verification adequacy, and (iii) test whether these perceptions predict support for integrity-based reform.

2. Methods

Design

A convergent parallel mixed-methods socio-legal design combined doctrinal analysis with empirical field research. Qualitative and quantitative strands were collected concurrently, analyzed separately, and triangulated at interpretation, enabling the lived institutional account to be cross-validated against measurable stakeholder perceptions.^{20,21}

Setting and period

Fieldwork was conducted over a six-month period in 2024 in a province on the western seaboard of Indonesia characterized by strong Islamic-Malay customary law. To protect institutional informants and comply with ethical protocols, specific regencies and cities were anonymized into three clusters: Cluster A (a high-density urban centre), Cluster B (a resource-rich semi-urban area), and Cluster C (a rural coastal region).

Participants and sampling

The qualitative strand used purposive sampling of 15 key informants: officials of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights regional office, members of the Notary Supervisory Councils (regional and provincial), board members of the Indonesian Notary Association, newly appointed notaries (under three years), and a traditional Malay customary leader. The quantitative strand recruited 185 legal-profession stakeholders (notaries 51.4%, supervisory-council members 17.3%, legal academics 15.7%, association board 9.7%, regulatory officials 5.9%) through stratified proportional sampling across the three clusters. The achieved sample exceeded the a priori requirement ($n=129$) for detecting a medium effect ($f^2=0.15$) in a four-predictor regression at power 0.95, α 0.05.

Instruments and variables

Document analysis covered appointment dossiers, recruitment forms, standard operating procedures, and ethical-violation records. The survey operationalized five constructs on five-point Likert scales adapted from validated integrity and legal-consciousness instruments:^{15,17,20} Administrative Reductionism

Perception (5 items), Institutional Inertia (4 items), Living-Law Integration Deficit (4 items), Perceived Verification Adequacy (5 items), and Support for the SIR Reform model (6 items). Internal consistency was acceptable to high (Cronbach's α 0.81–0.89). Content validity was confirmed by three socio-legal experts; a pilot ($n=20$, excluded) refined wording.

The documentary corpus comprised appointment dossiers and verification checklists obtained from the regional office, the standard operating procedures of the supervisory councils, recruitment and oath-taking records, and anonymized ethical-violation case files spanning the study period. Documents were coded for the evidentiary basis on which the spirituality criterion was recorded as satisfied, the presence or absence of any integrity or character instrument, and the procedural locus at which moral fitness was assessed. This corpus provided the institutional ground truth against which interview claims and survey perceptions were triangulated.

Scale development and data management

Each construct was measured with items phrased as concrete perceptions of the appointment and verification process rather than abstract attitudes, to anchor responses in observable institutional practice. Administrative Reductionism items probed the sufficiency of police records and stamped declarations as proxies for devotion; Institutional Inertia items addressed budgetary, parametric and standardization barriers; Living-Law Integration Deficit items addressed the neglect of customary and peer moral assessment; Perceived Verification Adequacy items asked whether the current process actually screens for integrity; and Support for SIR items assessed endorsement of psychometric and customary screening reforms. Responses were anchored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Completed instruments were screened for inattentive responding and missingness; the analyzed dataset contained no missing values after listwise screening of the pilot-validated form.

Statistical analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed in Python (pandas, SciPy). Distributional assumptions were screened with Shapiro–Wilk tests and inspection of skewness; given large-sample robustness, parametric procedures were

retained. Analyses comprised descriptive statistics with 95% confidence intervals, a Pearson correlation matrix, multiple ordinary-least-squares regression predicting reform support (standardized β , R^2 , adjusted R^2 , Cohen's f^2), one-way ANOVA across clusters with η^2 , and an independent-samples t-test (urban versus non-urban) with Cohen's d . Exact p-values are reported to three decimals ($p < 0.001$ where smaller). Qualitative transcripts were thematically analyzed following the data-condensation, display, and conclusion-drawing framework, with codes organized in NVivo.²¹

The analytic strategy was specified before modelling: support for reform served as the dependent variable, with administrative reductionism, institutional inertia, living-law integration deficit and perceived verification adequacy entered simultaneously as predictors, reflecting the theoretical expectation that each contributes independently. Multicollinearity was inspected through inter-predictor correlations and variance-inflation factors, all within acceptable bounds. Effect sizes accompanied every inferential test—Cohen's f^2 for the regression, η^2 for the ANOVA, and Cohen's d for the group contrast—so that practical magnitude, not merely statistical significance, governed interpretation.

Rigour and trustworthiness

Qualitative rigour was pursued through methodological triangulation across interviews and

documents, member-checking of interpreted themes with a subset of informants, an audit trail of coding decisions, and reflexive bracketing of the research team's legal-scholarly priors. Quantitative rigour rested on a priori power analysis, expert content-validity review, pilot refinement, reliability estimation, and assumption screening. Convergence between the strands—where survey patterns and verbatim accounts pointed in the same direction—strengthened inferential credibility, while divergences were retained as analytic puzzles rather than smoothed away.²¹

Ethics

The study received approval from the CMHC Ethics Committee (CMHC/EC/2024/0417). All participants provided written informed consent; institutional and locational identifiers were anonymized; data were stored securely and access-restricted.

3. Results

Of 185 respondents, 59.5% were male and 40.5% female, with a mean age of 43.1 years (SD 8.8) and 11.3 years (SD 6.2) of professional experience. Most held a master's degree (43.2%) or a doctorate (17.3%). The full composition of the sample across the three clusters is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample characteristics (n = 185).

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	110	59.5
	Female	75	40.5
Role	Notary	95	51.4
	Supervisory Council	32	17.3
	Legal Academic	29	15.7
	Notary Association	18	9.7
	Regulatory Official	11	5.9
Cluster	Cluster A (urban)	71	38.4
	Cluster B (resource-rich)	62	33.5
	Cluster C (rural coastal)	52	28.1
Education	Masters (S2)	80	43.2
	Doctorate (S3)	32	17.3
	Bachelor+Notary (S1+MKn)	73	39.5

Notes: percentages may not total 100 owing to rounding; mean age 43.1 years (SD 8.8); mean experience 11.3 years (SD 6.2).

Perceptions of the verification regime

Stakeholders rated administrative reductionism high (M=4.06, SD 0.64, 95% CI 3.97–4.15), institutional inertia high (M=3.86, 95% CI 3.76–3.97), and the living-

law integration deficit high (M=3.91, 95% CI 3.81–4.01). Perceived verification adequacy was low (M=2.39, 95% CI 2.28–2.5), while support for the SIR reform model was high (M=4.02, 95% CI 3.91–4.13). Shapiro-Wilk

statistics ranged 0.94–0.98 and all scales showed acceptable-to-high reliability, as detailed in Table 2; the

construct means with their 95% confidence intervals are illustrated in Figure 1.

Table 2. Construct descriptives, reliability, and primary outcome analysis (n = 185).

Construct	Items	Mean	SD	95% CI	Cronbach α	Shapiro-Wilk W
Administrative Reductionism	5	4.06	0.64	3.97–4.15	0.82	0.954
Institutional Inertia	4	3.86	0.73	3.76–3.97	0.83	0.957
Living-Law Integration Deficit	4	3.91	0.69	3.81–4.01	0.81	0.961
Perceived Verification Adequacy	5	2.39	0.77	2.28–2.5	0.87	0.98
Support for SIR Reform	6	4.02	0.75	3.91–4.13	0.89	0.94

Notes: Scales scored 1–5; higher Perceived Verification Adequacy denotes a more adequate process. All Shapiro-Wilk $p < 0.050$; parametric tests retained given $n = 185$.

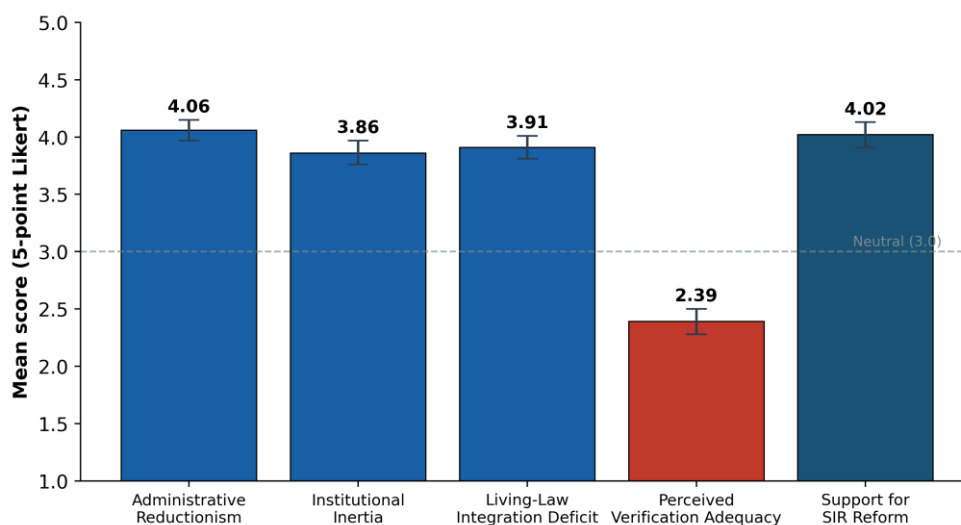


Figure 1. Stakeholder perceptions of the spirituality-verification regime (means \pm 95% CI).

Correlations and predictors of reform support

All constructs correlated in the expected directions. Support for reform correlated positively with administrative reductionism ($r = 0.614$, $p < 0.001$), institutional inertia ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.001$) and the living-law deficit ($r = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$), and negatively with perceived adequacy ($r = -0.624$, $p < 0.001$). Perceived adequacy correlated negatively with administrative reductionism

($r = -0.547$, $p < 0.001$). The full correlation matrix and the regression model are reported in Table 3. The four predictors jointly explained 60.5% of variance in reform support ($R^2 = 0.605$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.596$; $F(4, 180) = 68.84$, $p < 0.001$; Cohen's $f^2 = 1.53$). The standardized coefficients with their 95% confidence intervals are plotted in Figure 2.

Table 3. Correlation matrix and multiple regression predicting support for SIR reform (n = 185).

	ARP	II	LLI	SVA	SIR	β [95% CI]	p
ARP	1.00	0.40	0.23	-0.55	0.61	0.312 [0.199, 0.426]	<0.001
II	0.40	1.00	0.32	-0.42	0.54	0.216 [0.109, 0.322]	<0.001
LLI	0.23	0.32	1.00	-0.29	0.47	0.242 [0.142, 0.341]	<0.001
SVA	-0.55	-0.42	-0.29	1.00	-0.62	-0.293 [-0.409, -0.177]	<0.001
SIR	0.61	0.54	0.47	-0.62	1.00	— (DV)	—

Note: ARP, Administrative Reductionism Perception; II, Institutional Inertia; LLI, Living-Law Integration Deficit; SVA, Perceived Verification Adequacy; SIR, Support for reform (dependent variable). All correlations $p < 0.010$. β are standardized coefficients with 95% CI.

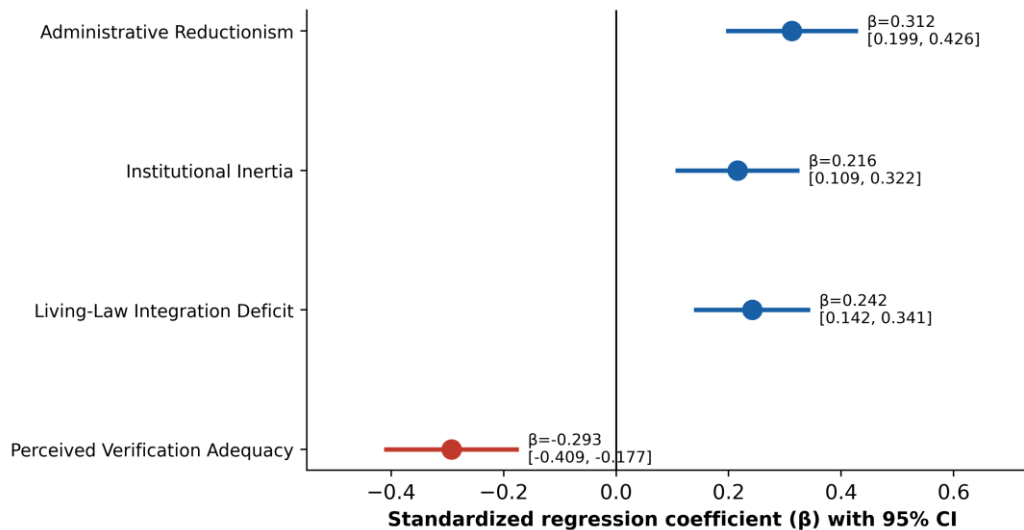


Figure 2. Standardized regression coefficients ($\beta \pm 95\% \text{ CI}$) predicting support for the SIR model.

Pattern of the descriptive evidence

The descriptive profile was internally coherent and pointed in a single direction. Four of the five constructs clustered well above the scale midpoint of 3.0, whereas perceived verification adequacy sat well below it, a configuration indicating that stakeholders simultaneously diagnosed a reductionist, inert and pluralism-blind regime and judged its current output inadequate. The narrow confidence intervals around each mean reflect consistency of opinion across the diverse respondent roles, suggesting that the perception of a hollow verification regime is shared by regulators, supervisors, practitioners and academics alike rather than confined to any single constituency. The high reliability coefficients (α 0.81–0.89) confirm that each construct was measured with internal consistency adequate for inferential modelling.

Perceptions were broadly shared across professional roles. Regulatory officials and supervisory-council members—those closest to the appointment process—rated administrative reductionism and institutional inertia at least as highly as notaries and academics, indicating that the diagnosis originates partly from within the administering institutions rather than solely from external critics. Support for the SIR reform was uniformly high across roles, with no constituency falling below the scale midpoint, suggesting that the appetite for substantive integrity screening is not a sectional

demand but a field-wide consensus that current routines have failed to channel.

Cluster differences and qualitative triangulation

Perceived verification adequacy differed significantly across clusters (ANOVA $F(2,182)=6.9$, $p=0.001$, $\eta^2=0.07$), being lowest in the resource-rich semi-urban Cluster B ($M=2.11$) relative to urban Cluster A ($M=2.5$) and rural Cluster C ($M=2.58$), as illustrated in Figure 3. Administrative reductionism was perceived more strongly in the urban cluster than elsewhere ($M=4.29$ vs 3.92 ; $t(183)=3.92$, $p<0.001$, Cohen's $d=0.593$). These quantitative patterns triangulated three qualitative themes. First, administrative reductionism of *taqwa*: a regulatory informant stated, “as long as they have a clear police record and sign the statement of faith on a stamp, we consider the spirituality requirement fulfilled; we are bureaucrats, not theologians.” Second, institutional inertia and formalism: a supervisory-council member conceded, “the law mandates devotion to God, but implementing a test is impossible without budget and standard indicators—it is an empty clause formally.” Third, disconnect with living law: a customary leader observed, “a notary who falsifies a deed betrays God; the state’s appointment system ignores this local moral screening.”

Taken together, the strands converged: the constructs that practitioners rated highest in the survey—reductionism, inertia and living-law neglect—were the same phenomena that informants narrated in

interviews, and the low adequacy rating mirrored the “empty vessel” and “transactional selection” language of the qualitative accounts. This convergence across independent data sources strengthens confidence that

the perceived hollowness of the verification regime is a robust feature of the field rather than an artefact of a single method.

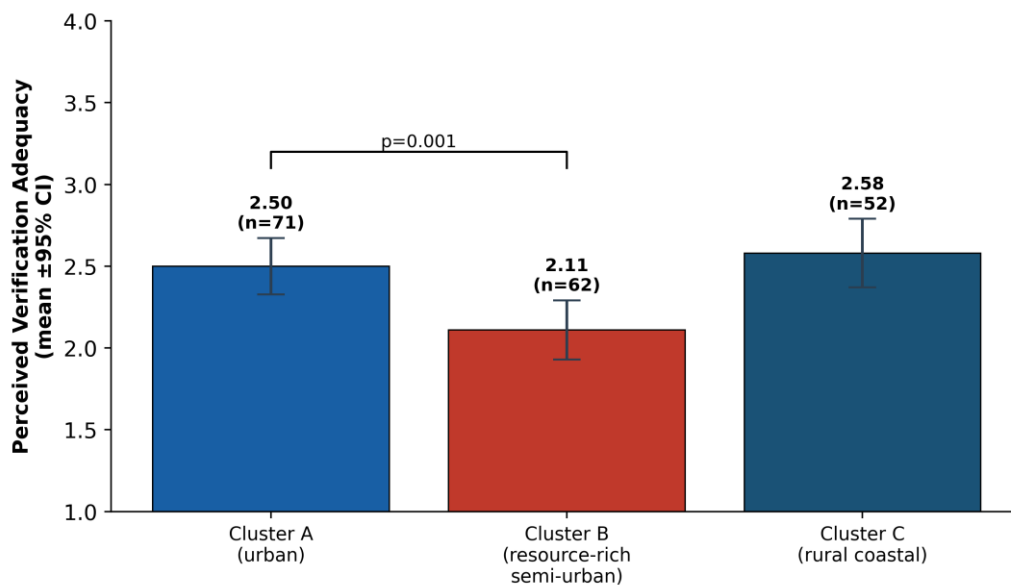


Figure 3. Perceived verification adequacy across study clusters (mean ± 95% CI; one-way ANOVA).

The magnitudes are substantial by conventional benchmarks. The regression effect size (Cohen’s $f^2=1.53$) far exceeds the threshold for a large effect, indicating that the four perception constructs capture a dominant share of the variation in reform support rather than a marginal increment. The cluster difference in perceived adequacy ($\eta^2=0.07$) represents a medium effect, and the urban–non-urban contrast in administrative reductionism ($d=0.59$) a medium-to-large one. These magnitudes imply that the patterns are not statistical curiosities inflated by sample size but practically meaningful signals of how the field experiences the verification regime.

4. Discussion

This study set out to characterize and quantify how the constitutional spirituality requirement for notary appointment is verified, and what predicts stakeholder support for reform. Three findings stand out: stakeholders perceive the verification regime as administratively reductionist and inert, they judge the current process inadequate, and these perceptions strongly predict support for an integrity-based reform model, jointly explaining over three-fifths of its variance.

The high administrative-reductionism score and its low corollary—perceived adequacy—empirically substantiate what the qualitative data describe as the secularization of a transcendental mandate. By equating the absence of a criminal record with the presence of devotion, the state reduces a deep moral prerequisite to a documentary checklist. This converges with evidence that compliance frameworks underdetermine ethical conduct¹⁵ and that organizational culture, rather than individual disposition, drives professional deviancy.¹⁶ It also extends doctrinal accounts of notarial accountability^{2,10} by showing, with psychometric data, that practitioners themselves perceive the verification regime as hollow—precisely the “empty vessel” their narratives invoke.

The significant association between institutional inertia and reform support echoes governance research on accountability stalling in Indonesian institutions,⁵ where budget constraints and the absence of standardized parameters are mobilized to justify the status quo. Self-regulatory dynamics within professional associations similarly entrench formalism.¹⁵ Our regression indicates that the more stakeholders perceive inertia, the more they endorse externally standardized

integrity screening—suggesting an appetite for reform that current administrative routines suppress rather than reflect a defence of professional autonomy.

The living-law integration deficit was both highly rated and a significant predictor, and the cluster analysis sharpens its meaning. Perceived adequacy was lowest in the resource-rich semi-urban cluster, where ethical violations persist despite strong Adat-Syarak traditions. This pattern supports legal-pluralism and living-law theory:^{6,7,8} state mechanisms operating in a vacuum, detached from indigenous moral screening, forfeit a powerful source of normative control. The community's organic capacity to judge moral standing—what a customary leader framed as betrayal of God through deed falsification—remains unused by an appointment system that recognizes only national administrative documents.⁹

Theoretically, the results validate responsive-law theory.^{5,6} The verification regime is autonomous and rule-bound, treating spirituality procedurally; stakeholders, by contrast, gravitate toward a responsive model that demands substantive verification of integrity. The strong predictive structure (Cohen's f^2 1.53) indicates that perceptions of reductionism, inertia and living-law neglect are not diffuse grievances but a coherent latent demand for substantive, pluralism-sensitive reform.

Practically, these findings motivate the Spiritual-Integrous Recruitment (SIR) model. The model couples two reforms with a defensible evidence base. First, structured psychometric integrity testing before issuance of the appointment decree: meta-analytic evidence establishes that integrity tests validly predict counterproductive behaviour with limited adverse impact,^{17,18} addressing the supervisory councils' stated need for standardized indicators. Second, the institutionalized involvement of professional peers and local customary feedback to evaluate a candidate's substantive moral track record, operationalizing living law within state procedure.^{8,19} Comparative work on ethical-screening mechanisms in official recruitment suggests such hybrid models are feasible and improve selection quality.¹⁹

A further theoretical contribution is the construct of administrative reductionism itself. Beyond restating that

rules can be applied formalistically, the construct names a specific pathology: the substitution of a documentary proxy (a clean police record and a stamped declaration) for a substantive moral quality (devotion expressed as integrity), accompanied by an institutional self-understanding as processor rather than adjudicator. Measured and validated here, the construct travels beyond notaries to any appointment regime that codifies a moral prerequisite without operationalizing its verification, offering socio-legal scholarship a portable diagnostic.^{6,15}

The results also caution against treating religiosity as a self-executing proxy for integrity. Although religious values relate positively to anti-corruption integrity in survey evidence,³ our data show that a religiosity prerequisite left unverified does nothing to screen candidates; the mandate's force depends entirely on the instrument that operationalizes it. This reframes the policy problem from whether to require spirituality—settled by statute—to how to measure the integrity that spirituality is meant to guarantee, a measurement question for which validated integrity tests provide a partial, evidence-based answer while customary screening supplies cultural legitimacy.¹⁷⁻¹⁹

Adopting integrity screening also raises fairness considerations that the SIR model must address. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that well-constructed integrity tests retain predictive validity with limited adverse impact relative to many cognitive measures,¹⁸ but validity is contingent on transparent scoring, candidate due process, and protection against arbitrary or discriminatory application. Embedding customary and peer feedback introduces a complementary safeguard against narrow psychometric reductionism, yet it must itself be structured to prevent parochial bias or local capture. The model therefore pairs standardized testing with a documented, appealable customary-assessment step, so that the cure for administrative reductionism does not become a new, less accountable form of discretion.

In the Indonesian context, the SIR model aligns the appointment regime with the religiosity-integrity nexus documented across public office,^{1,3,14} while remaining sensitive to Adat bersendi Syarak. It reframes the spirituality clause not as dogmatic ornament but as a

measurable safeguard, consistent with calls to move Indonesian legal reform toward substantive justice.⁵ For a profession entrusted with authentic deeds, converting a symbolic prerequisite into an operational screen directly targets the white-collar malpractice that reductionism currently fails to prevent.^{2,11}

Situating these results against the 2018–2024 evidence base clarifies their contribution. Where prior Indonesian scholarship documented notarial supervision and accountability largely through doctrinal or single-method lenses,^{2,10} the present study quantifies practitioner perception and links it to a concrete reform preference. The negative association between perceived adequacy and administrative reductionism ($r=-0.55$) operationalizes, in measurable terms, the secularization thesis advanced qualitatively, and the predictive weight of the living-law deficit answers calls to treat indigenous normative orders as live regulatory resources rather than cultural background.⁶⁻⁸ The finding that urban respondents perceive reductionism most acutely is consistent with accounts of bureaucratic formalism intensifying where application volumes are highest and processing is most routinized.¹⁹

Comparatively, the dynamics observed here resonate with Southeast Asian scholarship on the politics of professional self-regulation and accountability, in which formal mandates coexist with weak verification because oversight bodies face resource constraints and incentives to minimize contestable discretion.^{5,15} The Indonesian case adds a distinctive religious-constitutional layer: the prerequisite is not merely a professional standard but a transcendental norm rooted in the First Sila of Pancasila, so its hollowing carries symbolic as well as instrumental costs. Reading the findings through legal-pluralism theory suggests that the remedy lies less in intensifying central bureaucratic control than in recognizing and channelling the plural normative orders—customary, religious and professional—already operative in the field.^{6,8}

For policy, the implication is that reform need not await a wholesale statutory overhaul. Because the perceived deficit is procedural rather than normative—the mandate exists; its verification does not—an administrative-regulatory pathway is available. Supervisory councils could adopt a standardized

integrity-screening protocol within existing appointment procedures, supported by a published indicator set that addresses the very objection (absence of parameters) used to justify inertia.⁵ Embedding a structured customary and peer-feedback step would convert the community's organic moral knowledge into an auditable input, aligning state procedure with living law while preserving due-process safeguards.^{9,19} Such measures translate the spirituality clause from aspiration into routine, and from a post-hoc disciplinary trigger into an ex-ante gate. Crucially, because the strongest predictor of reform support is the perception of administrative reductionism, a reform that visibly replaces the documentary proxy with a substantive screen is likely to command broad professional legitimacy rather than resistance, easing the political economy of its adoption across supervisory jurisdictions.

At a normative level, the study exposes what may be termed the illusion of spirituality: a constitutional mandate that signals moral seriousness while delivering none of its operational substance. The danger of such an illusion is not neutral. By certifying that the spirituality requirement has been satisfied on the strength of a police record and a stamped declaration, the state issues a false assurance of integrity to the public who rely on notarial deeds, and it grants individuals of unverified moral fortitude the authority to bind others' legal interests.^{2,11} An unenforced moral prerequisite is thus worse than an honest silence, because it manufactures confidence it cannot justify. Reform that operationalizes the clause would not add a new burden so much as redeem a promise the law already makes.

Strengths and limitations

Strengths include the convergent mixed-methods design, a powered and diverse sample, validated scales with high reliability, and triangulation of inferential statistics with verbatim institutional accounts. Several limitations temper interpretation. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inference; the predictive model captures association, not temporal ordering. Self-report perceptions may carry social-desirability and common-method variance, although anonymity and heterogeneous roles mitigate this. The single-province focus, necessary for confidentiality and cultural specificity, may limit transferability to provinces with

weaker customary-law traditions, and the anonymized clustering, while ethically required, constrains ecological detail. Future research should pursue longitudinal and multi-province designs that track appointed cohorts over time, pilot the SIR model through a randomized or staggered implementation across supervisory jurisdictions, validate the integrity instrument against behavioural outcomes such as disciplinary records, and extend the analysis comparatively to other appointed legal officials—land deed officials, sworn translators and curators—whose statutes carry analogous moral prerequisites. Qualitative follow-up with candidates who experience a reformed process would illuminate procedural-justice perceptions that a perception survey cannot capture. A confirmatory factor analysis and a structural model estimating the constructs with explicit measurement error would further corroborate the discriminant validity of the five perception dimensions and refine the magnitude of their independent contributions to reform support.

5. Conclusion

The spirituality requirement for notary appointment in Indonesia is trapped in legal formalism: regulatory authorities reduce a transcendental constitutional mandate to an administrative checklist, sustained by institutional inertia and the absence of measurable integrity indicators. Stakeholders perceive this verification regime as inadequate, and these perceptions strongly predict support for reform, explaining 60.5% of its variance. To restore professional dignity, the state should pivot toward responsive law by adopting the Spiritual-Integrous Recruitment model, integrating psychometric integrity testing with living-law screening. Future longitudinal and multi-site studies should evaluate the model's capacity to curb notarial malpractice and convert a dogmatic illusion into a measurable safeguard of legal professionalism.

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