



Integration of Normative and Empirical Approaches in Modern Legal Research

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Abstract

Background: Legal research often faces a methodological gap between *law in books* and *law in action*, which limits the understanding of why legal norms are not always effectively implemented in society.

Objective: This study aims to examine methodological challenges in modern legal research by exploring the relationship between normative and empirical approaches from a socio-legal perspective.

Methods: This study employs a normative-empirical literature-based approach using socio-legal analysis. Secondary data, including legal regulations, court decisions, and previous empirical studies, were analyzed through literature reviews and document analysis to identify gaps between legal norms and their implementation in practice.

Results: The findings demonstrate that the relationship between *law in books* and *law in action* is dynamic and frequently influenced by social, cultural, economic, and power-related factors. Normative approaches alone cannot fully explain legal realities, whereas empirical approaches may lack sufficient prescriptive orientation. A socio-legal approach provides an integrative framework by combining normative analysis, empirical inquiry, and contextual interpretation.

Conclusion: This study proposes a multi-level integrative socio-legal research design that bridges normative and empirical dimensions, enabling legal analysis to understand law not only as a system of formal rules but also as a living social practice.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of modern law demonstrates increasingly complex dynamics in understanding the relationship between law in books and law in action. Law in books refers to law in the form of written norms contained in statutes, regulations, court decisions, and legal doctrines that are prescriptive and systematic. Conversely, law in action describes how law is implemented, applied, and interpreted within the practices of people's lives ([Mustafa, 2024](#)). The relationship between the two does not always develop harmoniously. Legal norms that are rationally designed are often unable to accommodate dynamic and complex social realities. This inconsistency creates a gap between law as a formal rule and law as a social practice, causing law to be perceived as unresponsive to societal needs. In Indonesia, this gap is concretely illustrated by the continued practice of prohibiting marriage between employees in several companies even after the

Constitutional Court's 2017 ruling invalidated such prohibitions ([Prawiraharjo et al., 2025](#)), an empirical phenomenon discussed further below.

This condition confirms that legal understanding cannot be limited solely to the normative dimension but must also be examined within a broader social context ([Cotterrell, 2017](#); [Roele, 2025](#)). The relationship between law in books and law in action within the Indonesian legal system can also be reviewed through the existence of laws and regulations that normatively guarantee citizens' rights.

The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, particularly Article 28D paragraphs (1) and (2), affirms that:

"Everyone has the right to fair legal recognition, guarantees, protection, and certainty, as well as the right to work and receive fair and proper treatment in employment relationships."

This provision demonstrates that, normatively, the law has established a strong foundation for ensuring justice and equality. Furthermore, Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower regulates worker protection, including the prohibition of discrimination in employment relationships.

However, in practice, the implementation of these norms often does not operate optimally, as demonstrated by various cases of workers' rights violations that continue to occur. Furthermore, Constitutional Court Decision Number 13/PUU-XV/2017, which annulled the prohibition of marriage between employees within a company, represents a concrete example of how law as law in books seeks to adapt to principles of justice and human rights. The ruling affirmed that such prohibitions contradict citizens' constitutional rights to establish a family and obtain employment.

Nevertheless, empirical realities indicate that several companies continue to maintain discriminatory policies, thereby creating a gap between prevailing legal norms and actual practices. Therefore, examining the relationship between law in books and law in action has become increasingly important to ensure that law does not merely exist at the normative level but can also be realized effectively within social life.

The need to examine the relationship between law in books and law in action has become increasingly urgent as the complexity of legal issues in the modern era continues to expand ([Wulandari, 2026](#)). Social transformation, technological developments, and changes in patterns of community interaction require law to adapt rapidly and appropriately. Normative approaches that focus excessively on legal texts often produce analyses that are abstract and less applicable. Conversely, empirical approaches that concentrate solely on social data without a strong normative foundation risk losing their prescriptive direction ([Dizon, 2024](#)).

The socio-legal approach emerges as an alternative framework that seeks to bridge these two dimensions by integrating normative and empirical analyses within a comprehensive framework. The urgency of this study lies in its effort to produce an understanding of law that is not only formally valid but also socially relevant and effective in practice, enabling law to function as an instrument of social justice ([Widyani et al., 2025](#)). The socio-legal approach is preferred over a purely normative approach, which risks producing formally valid but socially disconnected analyses, and over a purely empirical approach, which risks losing prescriptive direction, because it maintains the normative standards of law in books while systematically examining them against documented practices, thereby addressing both legal validity and social relevance simultaneously.

The study of the relationship between law in books and law in action within a socio-legal approach has been widely discussed in contemporary legal research. One relevant study is the work of Paul R. Tremblay ([2024](#)), entitled "The Ethics of Honoring Law in Action." This study examines the tension between law as a formal norm (law in books) and legal practice within social reality (law in action). Tremblay ([2024](#)) argues that, under certain conditions, legal practice may possess stronger legitimacy than written law, particularly when such practices are supported by broad social acceptance. This research confirms that law does not operate mechanically but is influenced by social contexts and the ethical dimensions of the legal profession. However, the study focuses primarily on ethical and professional practice aspects and therefore does not provide a concrete empirical analytical framework for explaining how such gaps emerge within specific socio-legal contexts.

Furthermore, research by Prawiraharjo ([2025](#)) published in the journal *Consolidation*, entitled "Bridging the Gap between Law in Books and Law in Action of Marriage between Same-Company Employees in Indonesia: A Socio-Legal Analysis," provides an empirical contribution to this

study. This research employs a socio-legal approach using a qualitative case study method involving employees of PT XYZ. The findings demonstrate a tangible gap between written legal provisions protecting workers' rights to marry and corporate practices that continue to prohibit marriage between employees. This gap is influenced by structural social factors, power relations between employers and workers, and legal culture within workplace environments. Furthermore, the study reveals that although the prohibition has been legally annulled by the Constitutional Court, discriminatory practices continue to persist in reality.

Compared with Tremblay (2024), which examines the ethical legitimacy of legal practices without offering a systematic empirical-analytical framework, and Prawiraharjo (2025), whose contribution remains limited to a single company-level case study, the novelty of this study lies in proposing a generalizable, multi-level integrative research design. This framework combines normative exploration, empirical mapping, and correlational-dialectical analysis through a two-way policy recommendation model that can be applied across diverse socio-legal research contexts rather than being restricted to a single case.

The limitation of previous research lies in the absence of a conceptual framework that systematically explains the relationship between law in books and law in action through an integrative methodological approach. Many studies remain confined within a dichotomy between normative and empirical analysis, resulting in partial understandings of legal phenomena. This limitation is also identified by Majeed and Hilal (2022), who argue that comparative legal methodologies frequently separate normative and empirical analyses rather than integrating them systematically. Normative approaches often overlook social realities because they emphasize the internal consistency of legal reasoning, whereas empirical approaches tend to neglect the prescriptive dimension of law because they primarily focus on describing social phenomena.

Moreover, existing socio-legal studies are still frequently understood in a limited manner as field-based research without sufficient attempts to construct conceptual models explaining the relationship between legal norms and social practices in depth. This condition indicates a significant research gap, also reflected in the methodological critiques of Majeed and Hilal (2022) and Pennisi (2022), namely, the need to formulate a methodological approach capable of integrating normative and empirical dimensions in a balanced manner.

These research gaps have become increasingly relevant within the context of modern law, which faces emerging challenges such as globalization, digitalization, and legal pluralism. These phenomena require an approach that can interpret law not only as a textual system but also as a dynamic social practice. Without integration between law in books and law in action, legal research risks producing recommendations that are difficult to implement or disconnected from societal needs. Therefore, an approach is required that can conceptually and methodologically bridge these two dimensions, enabling law to be understood comprehensively as a living and evolving system.

The purpose of this study is to critically analyze, through the theoretical perspectives of Cotterrell's (2017) socio-legal theory and the responsive law framework, the relationship between law in books and law in action from a socio-legal perspective, while also identifying methodological challenges faced by modern legal research (Roele, 2025). This research further aims to formulate a multi-level integrative conceptual framework encompassing normative exploration, empirical mapping, and correlational-dialectical analysis to explain the relationship between legal norms and social practices comprehensively, thereby overcoming the dichotomy between normative and empirical approaches.

The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the development of legal research methodologies that are more adaptive, comprehensive, and responsive to societal dynamics. The socio-legal approach is expected to serve as a bridge connecting normative and empirical dimensions, generating both theoretical benefits, by strengthening conceptual integration within normative and empirical legal scholarship, and practical benefits, particularly for policymakers, law enforcement officials, and legal educators.

METHOD

The type of research used was normative-empirical literature-based research with an analytical-critical descriptive design, conducted through a socio-legal reading of secondary legal and academic sources rather than primary field data collection. This design was consistent with the

study's objective of critically analyzing, not merely describing, the gap between written law and legal practice, as it required interpreting documented normative and empirical materials in relation to one another rather than simply cataloging them. This approach was selected because it enabled the researcher to trace the meanings, contexts, and social dynamics underlying the application of law in practice, as reported in existing literature and legal documents.

This study employed a socio-legal approach that combined normative analysis of law as law in books with empirical analysis of legal practices as law in action. This approach was selected because it provided a more comprehensive understanding of how law was not only understood as a written norm but also functioned as a social practice influenced by various factors, including social structures, culture, and power relations. Thus, the socio-legal approach was relevant for examining the gap between legal norms and their implementation within social life ([Pennisi, 2022](#)). Operationally, this integration was carried out by first mapping the normative structure of relevant statutory and judicial texts, then juxtaposing that structure against empirical patterns documented in previous socio-legal studies (e.g., [Prawiraharjo et al., 2025](#)), and finally interpreting points of convergence and divergence between the two through the correlational-dialectical procedure detailed in the Reconstruction/Solution section below.

The data used in this study consisted of secondary data obtained through literature studies and document analysis ([Dizon, 2024](#)). The secondary data included laws and regulations, court decisions, and scientific literature, such as journal articles, books, and previous research findings relevant to the topic of law in books and law in action. In addition, this study utilized secondary empirical evidence, including case studies and documented findings reported in previous socio-legal research (e.g., [Prawiraharjo et al., 2025](#)), rather than collecting original empirical data. These sources particularly illustrated the gap between legal norms and social practices in real-world contexts. The use of such secondary data aimed to strengthen the analysis of how law was implemented within social reality.

The data collection technique was conducted through literature review by examining various sources related to legal theory, socio-legal studies, and the concepts of law in books and law in action. In addition, document analysis was conducted to examine the substance of applicable legal norms and relevant policies. These two techniques were applied simultaneously to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between legal norms and their implementation in practice ([Saifuddin, 2025](#)).

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively using a thematic approach, namely by grouping data based on specific themes related to the gap between law in books and law in action. The analysis process involved identifying emerging patterns, examining the factors contributing to the gap, and interpreting findings based on the theoretical framework applied ([Majeed & Hilal, 2022](#)). This analysis was further supported by social structure theory and legal consciousness theory, which were used to explain how law was shaped by social conditions and how individuals understood and responded to legal norms in everyday life. Comparisons across themes were conducted through a constant comparative procedure, in which normative provisions identified in statutory and judicial texts were systematically cross-examined against empirically documented practices reported in previous studies. Points of convergence and divergence were thematically recorded for subsequent correlational-dialectical analysis.

Through this approach, this research was expected to provide an analysis that was not only normative but also contextual and critical toward legal practices within society. Thus, this research method enabled a deeper exploration of the relationship between law as a norm and law as a social practice, while also identifying methodological challenges in modern legal research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Relationship between *Law in Books* and *Law in Action* in a Socio-Legal Perspective

Analysis of the relationship between Law in Books and Law in Action demonstrates that law cannot be understood solely as a stand-alone and autonomous normative system, but rather as a social phenomenon that is continuously influenced by various external factors ([Al-mazroui, 2021](#); [Araújo, 2025](#)). Within a conceptual framework, Law in Books represents law as a written norm that is systematically structured in statutes and regulations, court decisions, and legal doctrines that are prescriptive and ideal in nature. Law in this sense functions as a guideline that regulates human

behavior with the aim of establishing social order, legal certainty, and justice.

Conversely, Law in Action reflects how those norms are interpreted, implemented, and experienced within the practices of everyday social life. Law in this dimension is no longer perceived merely as a static text, but as a dynamic process involving various actors, interests, and the social contexts surrounding it ([Peck, 2023](#)). The relationship between Law in Books and Law in Action is essentially dynamic and does not always operate in harmony. The inconsistency between ideal legal norms and their implementation in practice is frequently observed in various areas of law, including employment, justice, and public policy. This occurs because of differences between the assumptions underlying the formation of legal norms and the empirical conditions encountered during their application ([Roele, 2025](#)). Therefore, law is determined not only by normative texts but also by non-legal factors such as social structures, legal culture, economic interests, and power relations within society.

The findings presented below are conceptual-analytical in nature, synthesized from statutory and judicial materials together with empirically documented cases reported in previous socio-legal research. No new primary field data were collected for this study.

Documented empirical findings from previous research, particularly Prawiraharjo ([2025](#)), are used as an illustrative case to demonstrate the gap between legal norms and their practical application. These findings are analyzed systematically against the multidimensional compliance indicators proposed in this study. In the context of employment, for example, although the prohibition of marriage between employees has been declared invalid through a Constitutional Court ruling, discriminatory practices continue to occur in various companies. This phenomenon demonstrates that the existence of legal norms does not necessarily ensure their effective implementation in social reality ([Hermawan et al., 2022](#)). The gap between Law in Books and Law in Action in such cases is influenced by various factors, including corporate power dominance over workers, the weak bargaining position of employees within industrial relations, and limited access to legal protection mechanisms. Furthermore, legal culture also plays an important role, as practices contrary to legal provisions may continue because they are perceived as established habits or accepted social norms within the workplace environment ([Mujiono & Ticualu, 2025](#)).

Power relations represent one of the key factors influencing how law operates in practice. In many cases, actors with greater power, such as corporations or state institutions, possess greater capacity to interpret and apply legal provisions according to their interests. Consequently, law does not always function as an instrument of justice but may also serve as a means of legitimizing particular interests ([Mukhlis et al., 2026](#)). In this context, law is not entirely neutral, as its operation may be shaped by existing power dynamics within society. This condition reinforces the argument that understanding how law functions requires not only an examination of legal texts but also an investigation of the social contexts and power structures surrounding their implementation.

Beyond power relations, community legal awareness (legal consciousness) also contributes to determining the effectiveness of legal implementation. Legal awareness concerns how individuals understand, interpret, and respond to legal norms in their everyday lives. A low level of legal awareness may prevent individuals from exercising their rights or challenging practices that contradict legal provisions ([Vandzhurak et al., 2025](#)). In the employment context, workers in vulnerable positions often choose to accept discriminatory company policies due to concerns about job security or social pressure. This demonstrates that effective legal implementation depends not only on the existence of legal norms but also on how those norms are understood, internalized, and accepted by society.

The Socio-Legal approach becomes relevant in explaining the complexity of the relationship between Law in Books and Law in Action. This approach views law not merely as a system of norms but also as part of broader social dynamics. By integrating normative and empirical analysis, the Socio-Legal approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of how law functions within society. This approach enables researchers to identify factors contributing to the gap between legal norms and practices while also analyzing their implications for legal effectiveness ([Wahyudi et al., 2026](#)). Furthermore, the Socio-Legal approach provides space for critical legal examination by considering the social, cultural, and political dimensions that influence the formation and application of law.

Thus, the relationship between Law in Books and Law in Action cannot be understood as a

linear or deterministic relationship, but rather as a complex and multidimensional interaction. Law as text and law as practice represent two interconnected and inseparable dimensions. The gap between these dimensions, as examined through the normative-empirical comparison undertaken in this study, demonstrates that law functions not only as a regulatory instrument but also as a reflection of the social dynamics within society. Therefore, an integrative and contextual approach is required to understand law more comprehensively, ensuring that legal analysis is not limited to normative interpretation but is also capable of explaining empirical realities in depth. In this regard, the Socio-Legal approach serves as an important instrument for bridging this gap, enabling law to be understood as a living and evolving system within society.

Methodological Challenges in Integrating Normative and Empirical Approaches

Analysis of the relationship between Law in Books and Law in Action cannot be separated from methodological problems in legal research itself. So far, legal research has tended to be dominated by normative approaches that focus on the study of legal texts, such as statutes, regulations, court decisions, and legal doctrines. This approach positions law as a logical, systematic, and autonomous system, meaning that the resulting analysis places greater emphasis on the consistency of legal norms and their formal validity ([Wulandari, 2026](#)). Although normative approaches have the advantage of providing legal certainty and conceptual clarity, they are often unable to explain how legal rules operate within complex social realities. Consequently, they have limitations in explaining why laws that are normatively appropriate do not function effectively in practice ([Pennisi, 2022](#)).

On the other hand, empirical approaches in legal research have developed in response to the limitations of normative approaches. This approach seeks to understand law as a social phenomenon by focusing on empirical data obtained through observation, interviews, and case studies. The empirical approach enables researchers to examine how laws are implemented in real-life contexts, as well as identify social factors that influence legal application. However, this approach also has limitations, particularly regarding its lack of a prescriptive orientation ([Kretschmann, 2025](#)). Empirical research tends to be descriptive; therefore, although it can portray legal realities more concretely, it often does not provide clear guidance on how laws should be formulated, reformed, or improved.

The fundamental differences between normative and empirical approaches create methodological challenges in attempts to integrate the two. The normative approach is rooted in a doctrinal paradigm that emphasizes the analysis of legal norms, whereas the empirical approach is grounded in a social science paradigm that emphasizes the analysis of social behavior and reality. These differences exist not only in the objects of study but also in research methods, analytical techniques, and perspectives on law itself. Normative approaches generally employ deductive and argumentative methods, whereas empirical approaches utilize more inductive and interpretive methods ([Wahyudi et al., 2026](#)). These paradigmatic differences often create difficulties in combining the two approaches into a single comprehensive research framework.

Another methodological challenge lies in formulating an analytical framework capable of systematically connecting normative and empirical dimensions. Many studies claim to adopt a socio-legal approach; however, in practice, there remains a tendency to separate normative and empirical analyses without clear integration. This condition causes research findings to remain partial because they are unable to comprehensively explain the relationship between legal norms and social practices. Furthermore, limitations in mastering interdisciplinary methods also become obstacles, considering that the socio-legal approach requires a profound understanding not only of legal studies but also of social science perspectives ([Mukhlis et al., 2026](#)).

This condition demonstrates that the primary challenge in modern legal research lies not only in the object of study but also in developing research methodologies capable of addressing the complexity of legal issues. In this context, the socio-legal approach offers a more integrative methodological alternative by simultaneously combining normative and empirical analyses. This approach seeks not only to explain how law should be (*das sollen*), but also how law operates in social reality (*das sein*). Specifically, this integration proceeds through the three-stage design elaborated in the Reconstruction/Solution section: normative exploration, empirical mapping, and correlational-dialectical analysis. Thus, the socio-legal approach facilitates dialogue between legal norms and

social practices, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of law ([Sudarti et al., 2025](#)).

However, the application of the socio-legal approach is also inseparable from various challenges. Differences in paradigms between legal and social sciences, limitations of empirical data, and complexities in interdisciplinary analysis remain obstacles that must be addressed. Therefore, it is necessary to develop more flexible and adaptive research methodologies that can accommodate these differences without compromising analytical depth. Building on the conceptual synthesis above, this study proposes that modern legal research move toward an approach that not only prioritizes normative certainty but also emphasizes social relevance, allowing research outcomes to provide meaningful contributions to solving legal problems in society.

Thus, the methodological challenge of integrating normative and empirical approaches represents a significant issue in modern legal research. Without clear integration, legal research will remain trapped in a dichotomy between norms and practices, preventing it from providing comprehensive solutions. The socio-legal approach, in this regard, has the potential to bridge these gaps; however, it requires further methodological development to ensure its effective application across diverse legal research contexts.

Reconstruction/Solution

Methodological solutions for bridging the gap between law in books and law in action cannot be achieved merely by combining normative and empirical approaches in a simple or arbitrary manner. The integration must be systematically designed through a structured and multidimensional approach to legal analysis. This is important because law does not exist solely as textual provisions contained in statutes and regulations, but also operates within social spaces influenced by power relations, legal culture, levels of public legal awareness, economic interests, and the institutional capacity of law enforcement agencies. Therefore, legal research that aims to generate substantive solutions cannot be limited to the analysis of legal norms alone; it must also examine how these norms are implemented, interpreted, disregarded, or even misused within the realities of social life.

Systematically, this integrative design consists of three sequential stages: (1) Normative Exploration, identifying the logical structure, legal principles, and prescriptions embedded in statutory provisions and judicial decisions; (2) Empirical Mapping, documenting how these norms operate in practice through case studies, field observations, and institutional experiences; and (3) Dialectical Normative-Empirical Analysis, examining the interaction between normative and empirical findings to explain, rather than merely describe, the sources of divergence between legal ideals and practical realities.

The first stage in this integrative design is normative exploration. At this stage, researchers must identify the logical structure, legal principles, objectives underlying the formation of legal norms, and prescriptions contained in legislation, court decisions, and other legal documents. For example, in the context of labor law, researchers should not merely examine provisions within labor legislation or Constitutional Court decisions, but should also explore the fundamental principles underlying those provisions, such as worker protection, social justice, equality between workers and employers, and legal certainty. This normative analysis provides the initial foundation for understanding what the law ideally requires.

However, normative exploration alone is insufficient. Legal norms frequently employ formal, abstract, and idealistic language, whereas social practices are considerably more complex. Therefore, the second stage should focus on systematically mapping social practices or law in action. This mapping can be conducted through qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews, participant observation, case studies, and documentation of institutional practices. Through these methods, researchers can capture the actual experiences of legal actors, including workers, employers, labor unions, law enforcement officials, regulators, and affected communities. Empirical data are essential for determining whether legal norms are effectively implemented, the extent to which such norms are understood by society, and the factors preventing the law from functioning as intended.

In practice, the gap between law in books and law in action often emerges not solely from weaknesses in the substance of legal rules, but also from social and institutional factors that obstruct implementation. For instance, within industrial relations, workers are normatively entitled to legal protection, fair wages, freedom of association, and protection against discriminatory treatment. However, workers may hesitate to assert their rights due to fears of job loss, limited access to legal

assistance, or unequal bargaining power in relation to employers. This situation demonstrates that formally sound legal provisions do not automatically generate justice when they are unsupported by adequate social structures and institutional mechanisms.

The third stage involves conducting a dialectical analysis between normative and empirical data. This analysis does not merely aim to compare legal norms with social facts, but also seeks to explain the causes underlying the inconsistency between them. In other words, researchers should not simply conclude that “the rules do not work,” but must investigate why they fail to operate effectively. The causes may include weak state supervision, limited public legal awareness, unequal power relations between companies and workers, unclear implementing regulations, high costs of accessing justice, or a permissive legal culture toward violations. Through this analytical approach, legal research becomes more comprehensive because it reveals the structural causes of legal problems rather than merely identifying their visible symptoms.

Through this integrative design, legal research can generate findings that are not only normatively valid but also reflective of social realities. Normative validity means that research remains grounded in applicable legal principles, doctrines, and legal provisions. Meanwhile, being reflective of social reality means that research does not ignore the concrete experiences of individuals and communities in their interactions with the legal system. The combination of these two dimensions produces recommendations that are more realistic, applicable, and equitable. Legal research therefore becomes more than a conceptual exercise limited to interpreting legal provisions; it also functions as an instrument for evaluating how law operates and produces effects within society.

From an applied perspective, this reconstruction can be implemented through a two-way policy recommendation model. This model is essential because legal transformation cannot be driven solely from above through regulatory formulation; it must also incorporate the experiences of communities directly affected by legal policies. Methodologically, this model operates through a structured feedback mechanism: bottom-up inputs are systematically collected from documented empirical findings and categorized using the four-dimensional legal compliance indicators introduced later in this section. These inputs are then compared with top-down regulatory evaluation points, ensuring that the recommendation process follows a transparent, traceable, and reproducible procedure rather than an ad hoc conceptual framework.

The first direction is the bottom-up recommendation approach, which develops recommendations based on empirical findings from social realities. For example, if research reveals that discriminatory practices against certain groups of workers continue despite a Constitutional Court decision, these findings may serve as a basis for proposing regulatory amendments, establishing implementing regulations, or issuing more detailed technical guidelines. In this manner, community experiences are not merely treated as research data but also become a foundation for improving legal frameworks.

Bottom-up recommendations can also strengthen the responsive character of law. Responsive law refers to a legal system that does not merely impose state authority but can adapt to evolving social needs. Within this framework, the perspectives of vulnerable groups, including contract workers, women workers, persons with disabilities, informal workers, and economically disadvantaged communities, must be incorporated into legal evaluation processes. Without meaningful participation from affected groups, regulations risk becoming elitist instruments that fail to address actual social conditions. Therefore, socio-legal research can function as a bridge between community experiences and legal policymaking processes.

The second direction is the top-down recommendation approach, which originates from the normative and institutional framework of the state to ensure that legal rules can be effectively enforced. One example is the development of a social audit mechanism within law enforcement and regulatory compliance processes. Through this mechanism, legal compliance is assessed not only through administrative documentation but also through concrete evidence of behavioral and institutional changes in practice. For example, companies required to comply with judicial decisions should not merely provide written declarations of compliance; they should demonstrate substantive changes, including revisions to internal policies, adjustments to employment agreements, establishment of worker complaint mechanisms, and evidence that discriminatory practices have ceased following the enforcement of judicial decisions.

To ensure that the social audit mechanism operates objectively, verification should be conducted by an independent body involving academics, legal practitioners, civil society organizations, and representatives of affected communities. The involvement of socio-legal scholars is particularly important because they possess the methodological capacity to analyze law not only from a normative perspective but also from a social perspective. Consequently, legal audits should not remain formalistic procedures but should assess whether legal rules genuinely produce behavioral transformation and provide meaningful protection for society. This model can further strengthen accountability among corporations, governmental institutions, and law enforcement authorities in fulfilling their respective obligations.

Within the academic context, the reconstruction of the socio-legal approach also requires integration into legal education curricula. To date, legal education in many institutions has continued to emphasize mastery of written doctrines, theoretical concepts, and statutory provisions. Although this approach remains fundamental, it is insufficient for developing legal scholars who are sensitive to complex social issues. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce compulsory courses such as the Socio-Legal Clinic, a legal clinic designed to train students in preparing legal analyses and policy recommendations based on the integration of doctrinal reasoning and empirical evidence. Through this course, students do not merely learn how to interpret legal provisions but also understand how those provisions influence social life.

Within the Socio-Legal Clinic, students can be trained to conduct interviews with affected communities, develop observation instruments, analyze legal documents, examine judicial decisions, and formulate evidence-based policy recommendations. This learning model strengthens contextual and human-centered legal competencies. Students are not only prepared as legal experts who understand legal texts, but also as future legal practitioners capable of listening to the experiences of affected individuals, recognizing social inequalities, and developing more equitable legal solutions. In this way, legal education can directly contribute to reducing the distance between law as a normative framework and law as a social practice.

Furthermore, this approach can strengthen the culture of legal research within universities. Research conducted by students, lecturers, and legal research centers should not be limited to discussing normative legal issues but should also evaluate how laws are implemented within society. For example, research on Constitutional Court decisions should not merely assess the court's legal reasoning and doctrinal interpretation, but should also investigate whether the decisions are effectively implemented by relevant institutions. Through this approach, universities can function as centers of social oversight and producers of legal knowledge that contributes meaningfully to policymaking.

For this approach to remain sustainable, it is necessary to develop dynamic legal compliance indicators. Such indicators should not merely measure whether violations of legal provisions occur, but should also assess changes in behavior, levels of legal awareness, access to justice, and the balance of power relations within society. Legal compliance should not be narrowly understood as administrative conformity with formal requirements; rather, it should be viewed as a social process demonstrating that legal norms are consciously understood, accepted, and implemented by relevant actors. Therefore, compliance indicators must capture the formal, substantive, and social dimensions of how law operates.

These indicators can be formulated as a multidimensional framework consisting of several essential aspects. First, access to legal information, which measures the extent to which communities understand their rights and obligations under applicable laws. Second, willingness and ability to report violations, which evaluates whether individuals have sufficient protection and effective mechanisms for submitting complaints. Third, the responsiveness of law enforcement institutions, which examines how quickly, transparently, and fairly authorities respond to public complaints. Fourth, social sanctions against violators, which assesses whether communities and institutions demonstrate a consistent commitment to rejecting unlawful behavior. These four dimensions are crucial because legal effectiveness depends not only on written rules but also on the social and institutional conditions supporting their implementation.

The application of dynamic legal compliance indicators can also assist state institutions, such as the Ombudsman, the National Human Rights Commission (*Komnas HAM*), the Ministry of Manpower, and judicial institutions, in conducting periodic evaluations of legal effectiveness. Such

monitoring can be carried out through periodic institutional reports, public satisfaction surveys, digital complaint mechanisms, compliance audits, and evaluations based on empirical field data. Through clearly defined indicators, state institutions can determine whether a regulation merely exists as a formal legal instrument or whether it genuinely contributes to social transformation. This approach can also prevent law from becoming merely a symbolic form of legitimacy without producing meaningful social impact.

Furthermore, the socio-legal approach can be developed as an instrument for managing social change. This perspective emphasizes that law should not only be understood as a mechanism for imposing sanctions but also as a means of transforming behavior, strengthening legal awareness, and addressing unequal social structures. Within this framework, legal research has a strategic role in identifying implementation barriers, developing intervention strategies, and evaluating policy impacts in a sustainable manner. Consequently, law can function more responsively in addressing societal needs rather than becoming confined within rigid normative formalities.

Ultimately, methodological reconstruction through a socio-legal approach provides a renewed direction for legal research and legal practice. This approach positions law simultaneously as a normative system and a social phenomenon that must be examined through empirical realities. By integrating regulatory analysis, empirical evidence, two-way policy recommendations, clinical legal education, and dynamic legal compliance indicators, the gap between law in books and law in action can be addressed in a more systematic manner. Therefore, the socio-legal approach should no longer be viewed merely as a retrospective analytical method, but also as an instrument for structured, measurable, participatory, and accountable legal transformation.

CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes that the relationship between law in books and law in action is dynamic and not always harmonious because the application of law is significantly influenced by external factors, including power relations, social structures, legal culture, and the level of legal awareness within the community. The gap between written norms and social practices is not merely a failure of implementation but also reflects the limitations of overly abstract normative approaches and insufficiently contextualized empirical approaches. To overcome this dichotomy, this study reconstructs methodological solutions through a multi-level integrative research design that simultaneously combines normative and empirical analyses, as well as a two-way policy recommendation model (bottom-up and top-down) equipped with dynamic legal compliance indicators. Within this framework, the socio-legal approach is no longer merely descriptive and theoretical but becomes an instrument for structured, measurable, and accountable social change management.

More broadly, the findings and solutions proposed in this study shift the paradigm of modern legal research from a monodisciplinary orientation toward a contextual and interdisciplinary approach. By integrating law in books and law in action through a tiered methodological design, modern legal research can explain not only why legal gaps occur but also provide applicable recommendations for policymakers, law enforcement officials, and the public. Modern legal research employing a socio-legal approach, complemented by systematic methodological reconstruction, is essential for realizing a legal system that is not only normatively just but also effective in practice.

In sum, the principal methodological contributions of this study are: (1) a multi-level integrative research design that combines normative exploration, empirical mapping, and correlational-dialectical analysis; (2) a two-way (bottom-up and top-down) policy recommendation model; and (3) a set of dynamic legal compliance indicators for monitoring the socio-legal effectiveness of law. Nevertheless, this study is subject to limitations inherent in its literature-based design. Because it relies on secondary and documented data rather than original field research, the analysis cannot fully capture context-specific variations in how law in books and law in action diverge across different regions, sectors, or institutions in Indonesia. Future research employing primary qualitative methods (such as interviews, participant observation, or additional case studies) is needed to empirically validate the proposed integrative framework and legal compliance indicators.

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