



NORMATIVE DUALISM IN THE INDONESIAN LEGAL SYSTEM: THE DYNAMICS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SHARIA AND POSITIVE LAW

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Abstract

This article examines the normative dualism arising from the coexistence of Islamic law and positive law within the Indonesian legal system. As a pluralistic legal state, Indonesia accommodates both religious norms and statutory regulations, creating challenges in achieving legal certainty and consistency. This study employs a normative juridical method through statutory and conceptual approaches to analyze the interaction between sharia principles and positive law. The findings indicate that normative dualism often leads to interpretative inconsistencies and institutional fragmentation, while simultaneously reflecting Indonesia's commitment to legal pluralism. The study argues that legal harmonization through integrative interpretation and regulatory accommodation is necessary to bridge the gap between religious and state legal norms. Such harmonization is essential to strengthen legal certainty, preserve constitutional values, and support the development of a coherent national legal system.

Keywords: Normative Dualism; Islamic Law; Positive Law; Legal Harmonization; Indonesian Legal System.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian legal system background is characterized as a pluralistic system shaped by various sources of law that coexist and develop within society. This pluralism is rooted in the nation's historical development, which has brought together customary law, Islamic law, and positive law inherited from the Continental European legal tradition. These legal systems do not merely coexist but also interact and influence one another in the processes of law-making, interpretation, and enforcement. One of the most significant manifestations of this legal pluralism is the coexistence of Islamic law (Sharia) and state positive law. Their simultaneous operation reflects Indonesia's effort to accommodate religious values while maintaining its commitment to constitutionalism and the rule of law (Butt 2018).

As the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia has long incorporated Islamic legal principles into its legal framework. Sharia values have influenced social norms and legal consciousness and have gradually been integrated into national legislation. This integration can be observed in regulations governing marriage, Islamic banking, halal product certification, and

the authority of Religious Courts in resolving Sharia economic disputes. Such developments demonstrate that Islamic law has gained formal recognition as an important component of the national legal system rather than functioning solely as a religious norm (Yilmaz 2016).

Despite these developments, the integration of Islamic law into the national legal system has not always proceeded smoothly. In practice, the interaction between Sharia and positive law often gives rise to normative dualism, a condition in which two normative systems with different sources of legitimacy operate simultaneously within the same legal sphere. Islamic law derives its authority from religious teachings based on the Qur'an, Sunnah, and scholarly interpretation, whereas positive law derives its legitimacy from constitutional and legislative processes established by the state (Asad 2023). These differing foundations may create challenges when both systems are applied to regulate the same legal issues.

Normative dualism does not necessarily result in direct conflict between Sharia and positive law. However, it frequently generates challenges related to legal interpretation, consistency of application, and legal certainty. In certain situations, Sharia-based norms must be adapted to constitutional principles and statutory regulations, while positive law is expected to accommodate societal demands for greater recognition of religious values (Muhtar, Kasim, and Suryani 2023). Consequently, the relationship between Sharia and positive law is dynamic and requires an effective framework capable of reconciling their respective normative foundations.

From a theoretical perspective, this phenomenon can be explained through the concept of legal pluralism, which recognizes the coexistence of multiple normative orders within a single society. Legal pluralism acknowledges that state law is not the sole source of social regulation but operates alongside religious, customary, and other social norms (Tamanaha 2021). In Indonesia, legal pluralism is an unavoidable reality due to the country's cultural and religious diversity. Nevertheless, such pluralism also presents challenges in creating a coherent legal system, particularly when different legal orders pursue distinct values and objectives.

Empirically, normative dualism is evident in various legal sectors. In Islamic finance, for example, financial institutions must comply with both Sharia principles and national regulatory requirements. In the judicial sphere, judges are often required to interpret legal provisions containing both religious and constitutional dimensions (Sen 2018). Furthermore, the existence of Religious Courts alongside General Courts reflects institutional differentiation based on distinct normative foundations. While this arrangement seeks to provide legal accessibility and cultural legitimacy, it may also lead to jurisdictional overlaps and inconsistencies in legal interpretation.

The challenges posed by normative dualism have become increasingly significant in the context of globalization and legal modernization. Indonesia's legal

system is influenced not only by domestic political and social developments but also by international legal standards that emphasize legal certainty, transparency, and regulatory effectiveness. Under these circumstances, unresolved tensions between Sharia and positive law may contribute to legal fragmentation and reduce public confidence in the legal system (Husain, Ayoub, and Hassmann 2024).

Therefore, legal harmonization has become an essential objective. Harmonization seeks not only to minimize potential conflicts between normative systems but also to ensure that the incorporation of Sharia values into national law remains consistent with constitutional principles, human rights, and the rule of law. Through a coherent and integrative framework, harmonization can strengthen legal certainty while preserving Indonesia's commitment to religious values and legal pluralism. Based on these considerations, this study examines the challenges of normative dualism arising from the interaction between Sharia and positive law in Indonesia and analyzes the importance of legal harmonization in developing a coherent, just, and legally certain national legal system.

II. PROBLEM FORMULATION

Based on the background of the study, the formulation of the problems in this article is as follows:

1. How does normative dualism arising from the coexistence of Sharia law and positive law manifest within the Indonesian legal system?
2. How can legal harmonization mechanisms, including normative accommodation and contextual interpretation, contribute to reconciling Sharia-based norms with constitutional principles and the rule of law in Indonesia?

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a normative juridical research method with an analytical and conceptual approach to examine normative dualism between Sharia law and positive law within the Indonesian legal system. The research is designed to analyze law as a normative system, focusing on legal principles, statutory regulations, and doctrinal interpretations that govern the interaction between religious norms and state law. The primary approach adopted in this research is the statutory approach, which involves an examination of relevant constitutional provisions, laws, and regulations that institutionalize Sharia principles within the national legal framework. These include constitutional norms, statutes regulating religious courts, Islamic economic law, and other Sharia-based regulations that operate within Indonesia's positive legal system.

This approach enables a structured analysis of normative hierarchy, legal authority, and regulatory coherence. In addition, the study applies a conceptual approach by engaging with established legal theories, particularly theories of legal pluralism, normative integration, and the rule of law (Swenson 2018). Scholarly

works by leading legal theorists are used to construct an analytical framework for understanding how multiple normative systems coexist within a single legal order and how conflicts between them may be managed. This theoretical grounding ensures that the analysis is systematically linked to recognized doctrinal perspectives. A case approach is also utilized to analyze selected judicial decisions that reflect the practical application of Sharia norms within the positive legal system. These cases are examined to identify patterns of judicial reasoning, interpretative strategies, and institutional responses to normative dualism. The analysis of judicial practice provides empirical support to the normative discussion and illustrates how abstract legal principles operate in practice. The sources of legal materials used in this research are classified into primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials (Hamzani et al. 2023).

Primary legal materials consist of statutes, constitutional provisions, court decisions, and official regulatory instruments. Secondary legal materials include academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and scholarly commentaries relevant to Sharia law, positive law, and legal pluralism. Tertiary legal materials, such as legal dictionaries and encyclopedias, are used to clarify legal terminology and concepts.

Data collection is conducted through library-based legal research, involving systematic identification, classification, and review of relevant legal sources. The collected legal materials are then analyzed qualitatively using descriptive and prescriptive legal analysis. Descriptive analysis is employed to explain the existing legal framework and institutional arrangements, while prescriptive analysis is used to formulate normative arguments and propose integrative solutions. The analytical technique applied in this study is deductive legal reasoning, moving from general legal theories and constitutional principles to specific legal norms and practices.

This method allows the research to assess the consistency between theoretical frameworks and empirical legal realities. Where necessary, comparative references are employed to enrich the analysis without shifting the focus from the Indonesian legal context. Finally, the research emphasizes systematic coherence and normative consistency as evaluative criteria. By assessing the extent to which existing legal mechanisms ensure legal certainty, institutional harmony, and constitutional compliance, this study aims to contribute to the development of a coherent framework for managing normative dualism in Indonesia. The methodological design ensures that the research findings are analytically rigorous, theoretically grounded, and relevant to contemporary legal discourse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Normative Dualism between Sharia and Positive Law

The findings of this study demonstrate that normative dualism between Sharia law and positive law in Indonesia operates as an inherent feature of the

national legal system rather than an incidental anomaly. This dualism arises from Indonesia's historical, sociological, and constitutional foundations, which simultaneously accommodate religious norms and affirm the supremacy of state law. As a result, the interaction between Sharia principles and positive law permeates legislative processes, judicial reasoning, and institutional design (Ariyadi et al. 2025). At the legislative level, the incorporation of Sharia principles into statutory regulations represents a deliberate legal policy choice. Laws governing family relations, Islamic finance, and religious adjudication explicitly adopt religious doctrines and transform them into binding legal norms. This process reflects the state's recognition of religious values as a source of legal legitimacy within a plural society. However, the selective nature of this incorporation often results in parallel normative frameworks that coexist without a clearly articulated hierarchy.

The absence of a unified legislative methodology for integrating Sharia norms into positive law contributes to normative overlap. In several regulatory fields, Sharia-based provisions operate alongside general legal norms that originate from secular legal reasoning (Azam et al. 2025). When these norms address similar legal issues, ambiguity arises regarding which normative framework should prevail. This ambiguity complicates statutory interpretation and weakens normative coherence within the legal system. Such legislative overlap is particularly evident in areas where public and private law intersect. Family law and Islamic economic regulation, for instance, involve private religious values while also engaging public regulatory interests. The coexistence of distinct normative rationales within a single statute often produces legal uncertainty, especially when statutory language does not explicitly resolve potential conflicts between religious and secular principles. From an institutional standpoint, normative dualism is reinforced by the structural differentiation of legal bodies. The Indonesian legal system formally recognizes religious courts alongside general courts, each operating under distinct normative foundations (Salim 2015). While this institutional arrangement aims to respect religious autonomy, it also entrenches normative separation within the judicial structure.

Jurisdictional complexity emerges when legal disputes involve overlapping normative interests. Certain cases may fall simultaneously within the competence of religious and general courts, creating uncertainty for litigants and legal practitioners. This situation challenges the ideal of uniform legal application and raises questions about equal access to justice within a unified legal system. Empirical observations suggest that similar legal disputes may produce divergent outcomes depending on the forum in which they are adjudicated (Hakim 2020). Differences in normative orientation, procedural standards, and interpretative approaches contribute to inconsistent legal resolutions. Such discrepancies undermine the principle of equality before the law, which is central to constitutional governance. Judicial interpretation plays a crucial role in mediating normative

dualism. Judges are frequently confronted with statutory provisions that embed Sharia values within the framework of positive law.

In resolving disputes, judges must balance religious considerations with constitutional mandates, statutory hierarchy, and principles of legal certainty. The lack of standardized interpretative guidelines exacerbates this challenge. Judicial reasoning often relies on individual discretion, doctrinal preference, or institutional tradition. While such flexibility allows contextual sensitivity, it also increases the likelihood of inconsistent judicial outcomes across similar cases. Inconsistency in judicial interpretation has broader implications for legal predictability (Ibrahim et al. 2025). When legal actors cannot reasonably anticipate how courts will interpret Sharia-based provisions, confidence in the legal system diminishes. Legal certainty, which constitutes a fundamental component of the rule of law, becomes difficult to sustain under these conditions. Theoretically, the Indonesian experience aligns with legal pluralism theory, which recognizes the coexistence of multiple normative orders within a single social and legal space. Scholars of legal pluralism emphasize that such coexistence reflects social reality rather than legal deficiency. Indonesia exemplifies this reality through the formal recognition of religious norms within state law. Nevertheless, institutionalized legal pluralism requires effective coordination mechanisms to prevent fragmentation. Without clear principles of integration, pluralism risks transforming normative diversity into systemic incoherence (Berger 2018). The Indonesian case illustrates how pluralism, when insufficiently managed, may undermine legal unity rather than enhance legal responsiveness. Normative dualism thus operates not only as a sociological phenomenon but as a structural legal condition.

Overlapping norms, fragmented institutions, and divergent interpretative practices collectively shape a legal environment characterized by complexity and uncertainty. These conditions demand careful doctrinal and institutional analysis. Public trust in the legal system is directly affected by the persistence of unresolved normative dualism. Legal uncertainty and inconsistent adjudication create perceptions of unpredictability and inequality. Such perceptions weaken the legitimacy of legal institutions, particularly in a society that values both religious adherence and constitutional governance. Economic and regulatory sectors are not immune to these effects (Fauzia, Hamdani, and Octavia 2021). In areas such as Islamic finance, uncertainty regarding the interaction between Sharia compliance and positive law obligations may hinder regulatory effectiveness and market confidence. Legal actors require clarity to operate within a predictable normative environment.

The findings indicate that normative dualism cannot be resolved through ad hoc legal solutions. Structural challenges rooted in legislative design, institutional differentiation, and interpretative discretion require a comprehensive and coherent response (Kamariah n.d.). Addressing these challenges necessitates engagement with constitutional principles and established legal doctrines. Rule of law theory

provides a critical framework for evaluating the impact of normative dualism. Legal certainty, equality before the law, and institutional coherence remain essential benchmarks for assessing legal integration. Any accommodation of religious norms must operate within these foundational parameters. The study reveals that normative dualism becomes problematic not because of normative diversity itself, but because of the absence of a clear integrative framework (Hamidah and Saputra 2024).

Where integration mechanisms are underdeveloped, dualism evolves into fragmentation. This distinction is essential for understanding the nature of the challenge faced by the Indonesian legal system. Accordingly, normative dualism in Indonesia represents a systemic legal condition that requires deliberate and structured management. Legal diversity must be accompanied by normative clarity and institutional coordination. Without such measures, dualism risks undermining the very legal values it seeks to accommodate. In sum, the findings confirm that normative dualism in Indonesia manifests through legislative overlap, institutional differentiation, and interpretative inconsistency (Hariri and Babussalam 2024). These dynamics affect legal certainty, institutional integrity, and public confidence in the law. Addressing them remains a central task for the future development of Indonesia's pluralistic legal system.

The Impact of Normative Dualism on Legal Certainty and Law Enforcement

The study reveals that normative dualism between Sharia law and positive law has a direct and measurable impact on legal certainty within the Indonesian legal system. Legal certainty requires clarity, consistency, and predictability in the application of legal norms. When multiple normative systems regulate similar conduct without an explicit hierarchy, the ability of law to guide behavior is significantly weakened. Conflicting legal standards emerge as a primary source of uncertainty. Sharia-based norms and statutory provisions may prescribe different legal consequences for comparable actions, particularly in family law, economic transactions, and religiously regulated activities. This divergence complicates compliance, as adherence to one normative framework does not necessarily satisfy the requirements of the other. Legal subjects are placed in a precarious position where normative obligations overlap without clear coordination .

Individuals and institutions may act in good faith under one legal standard only to find themselves in violation of another. This situation undermines the function of law as a reliable guide for social conduct. Judges are among the legal actors most directly affected by normative dualism. In adjudicating disputes involving Sharia-related matters, judges must navigate competing normative references embedded within legislation. The absence of authoritative interpretative guidelines leaves significant room for judicial discretion. Variations in judicial reasoning are not uncommon under these conditions. Different courts may prioritize statutory interpretation or religious principles based on institutional

orientation or individual judicial philosophy. This divergence produces inconsistent outcomes across similar cases, weakening doctrinal stability.

Law enforcement officials face parallel difficulties in the execution of legal mandates (Timpf 2017). Enforcement decisions must comply with statutory obligations while also respecting Sharia compliance requirements in designated sectors. Without procedural clarity, enforcement actions risk inconsistency or legal challenge. For regulatory agencies, overlapping mandates generate operational uncertainty. Agencies supervising Sharia-based economic activities often operate at the intersection of religious compliance and administrative law. Weak coordination mechanisms limit their capacity to act decisively and uniformly. Individuals experience the consequences of normative ambiguity in practical terms. Citizens involved in family law disputes or religious transactions often lack certainty regarding which legal standard will ultimately determine their rights and obligations. This uncertainty affects access to justice and legal protection. Business actors are particularly vulnerable to the effects of normative dualism.

Economic decision-making relies on stable and predictable regulatory environments. In sectors such as Islamic finance and halal industries, uncertainty complicates risk assessment and increases compliance costs. Empirical analysis of judicial decisions reveals patterns of inconsistency that reflect structural uncertainty. Courts addressing similar disputes frequently reach divergent conclusions based on differing normative references. These variations are not incidental but arise from systemic normative overlap. Unequal legal outcomes raise serious concerns regarding equality before the law. When similar cases receive different treatment due to normative ambiguity, the principle of fairness is compromised. Such disparities weaken the normative authority of the legal system. Public confidence in legal institutions is closely tied to consistency in legal decision-making. Perceptions of unpredictability or selective enforcement reduce trust in the judiciary and regulatory bodies. Over time, diminished trust erodes voluntary compliance with legal norms.

Normative dualism also affects the coherence of legal doctrine. Judicial reasoning becomes fragmented when courts alternate between Sharia principles and statutory interpretation without a consistent methodological foundation. This fragmentation impedes the development of stable jurisprudence. From an enforcement perspective, regulatory agencies encounter structural constraints. Overlapping legal rationales lead to inconsistent supervision and enforcement strategies (Azani 2021). In some instances, agencies prioritize easily enforceable standards while avoiding contested normative areas. Such conditions create opportunities for regulatory arbitrage. Legal subjects may strategically select the forum or normative framework that offers the most favorable outcome (Graham and Serdaru 2020). This practice undermines regulatory objectives and weakens institutional credibility. Institutional fragmentation exacerbates these challenges. Different agencies operate under distinct normative logics, preventing the

formation of unified enforcement policies. Fragmentation reduces efficiency and complicates accountability.

Legal certainty theory emphasizes predictability as a core component of the rule of law. Normative dualism disrupts predictability by allowing multiple legal standards to coexist without coordination. The result is a system that appears formally valid but substantively unstable. Legal positivist theory highlights the importance of formal validity and institutional authority. When religious norms are incorporated into positive law without clear positivization mechanisms, tensions emerge between moral legitimacy and enforceability (Habermas 2015). Legal pluralism theory explains the coexistence of multiple normative orders but underscores the necessity of institutional management. Without harmonization, pluralism shifts from accommodation to conflict, reducing enforcement effectiveness. The findings indicate that normative harmonization is essential for restoring legal certainty.

Harmonization does not require the elimination of Sharia norms but their alignment within a coherent legal hierarchy that respects constitutional authority. In conclusion, normative dualism significantly undermines legal certainty and law enforcement effectiveness in Indonesia. Addressing this challenge is essential for strengthening the rule of law in a pluralistic legal system and ensuring that legal diversity operates within a stable and predictable framework

IV. CONCLUSION

Normative dualism between Sharia law and positive law constitutes a structural characteristic of the Indonesian legal system, reflecting the country's commitment to legal pluralism and the accommodation of religious values within a constitutional framework. This dualism manifests through legislative overlap, institutional differentiation, and divergent judicial interpretations, particularly in sectors such as family law, Islamic finance, and religious adjudication. While the coexistence of these normative systems demonstrates Indonesia's ability to recognize diverse legal sources, it also creates challenges related to legal certainty, consistency of application, and institutional coherence.

The findings reveal that normative dualism becomes problematic when mechanisms for integrating Sharia-based norms and positive law are insufficiently developed. Overlapping legal authorities, jurisdictional complexities, and inconsistent judicial reasoning may lead to legal uncertainty, unequal legal outcomes, and reduced public confidence in legal institutions. These conditions indicate that the challenge faced by Indonesia is not the existence of legal diversity itself, but the absence of a clear and coherent framework capable of coordinating multiple normative orders within a unified legal system.

To address these challenges, legal harmonization is essential. Harmonization should be pursued through normative accommodation, contextual interpretation, and the development of integrative legal frameworks that align

Sharia principles with constitutional values, human rights standards, and the rule of law. Such an approach does not require the elimination of religious norms but rather their systematic integration into the national legal hierarchy. Through effective harmonization, Indonesia can strengthen legal certainty, improve institutional coordination, preserve its pluralistic legal identity, and support the development of a coherent, just, and predictable national legal system

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