

Public Perceptions of Eigenrichting's Actions in the *Khalwat* Case

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ARTICLE HISTORY Received: 10-11-2025 Accepted: 07-12-2025 Publishe: 31-12-2025 Keywords: <i>Khalwat, Eigenrichting, Public Perception.</i>	Abstract: The phenomenon of "eigenrichting," which refers to actions taken by individuals or groups outside of legal cedures to punish those perceived as criminals, is a significant concern in many societies. Normatively, eigenrichting is not justified and is against the law, as stipulated in Article 170 of the Indonesian Criminal Code concerning violence. This study aims to explore the factors leading to eigenrichting actions, particularly in cases of khalwat (close proximity between members of the opposite sex who are not married) in West Aceh. Employing a qualitative research methodology, specifically empirical legal research, this study examines both legal provisions and their application within the community. The results reveal that eigenrichting actions in West Aceh are primarily driven by five factors: (1) public distrust in law enforcement, (2) insufficient religious knowledge, (3) lack of legal understanding, (4) emotional responses, and (5) spontaneous community reactions. These factors contribute to varied public perceptions of eigenrichting actions against khalwat perpetrators. The study suggests that the community should be encouraged to report such incidents to authorities to prevent extrajudicial actions.
Kata kunci: <i>Khalwat, Eigenrichting, Persepsi Masyarakat.</i>	Abstrak: Fenomena "eigenrichting", yang merujuk pada tindakan yang dilakukan oleh individu atau kelompok di luar prosedur hukum untuk menghukum mereka yang dianggap sebagai pelaku kejahatan, merupakan perhatian serius di banyak masyarakat. Secara normatif, eigenrichting tidak dibenarkan dan bertentangan dengan hukum, sebagaimana diatur dalam Pasal 170 Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana (KUHP) Indonesia mengenai kekerasan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi faktor-faktor yang mendorong terjadinya tindakan eigenrichting, khususnya dalam kasus khalwat (berduaan antara laki-laki dan perempuan yang bukan pasangan suami istri) di Aceh Barat. Dengan menggunakan metodologi penelitian kualitatif, khususnya penelitian hukum empiris, studi ini mengkaji ketentuan hukum serta penerapannya di masyarakat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tindakan eigenrichting di Aceh Barat didorong oleh lima faktor utama: (1) ketidakpercayaan masyarakat terhadap penegak hukum, (2) kurangnya pengetahuan agama, (3) rendahnya pemahaman hukum, (4) respons emosional, dan (5) reaksi spontan masyarakat. Faktor-faktor ini berkontribusi terhadap beragam persepsi masyarakat mengenai tindakan eigenrichting terhadap pelaku khalwat. Studi ini menyarankan agar masyarakat didorong untuk melaporkan kejadian semacam itu kepada pihak berwenang guna mencegah tindakan di luar hukum.



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INTRODUCTION

The enforcement of criminal law within society presents various challenges, one of which is the emergence of vigilantism or *eigenrichting*. Vigilantism refers to the extrajudicial punishment of individuals accused of committing crimes without undergoing legal processes. An example of this can be seen in instances where a mob punishes a thief caught in the act without waiting for law enforcement intervention ([Sederberg & Rosenbaum, 2023](#)). As stated in Article 1, Paragraph (3) of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Indonesia is a state governed by law. This implies that all decisions, actions by state apparatus, and behaviors of citizens must be grounded in legal principles.

The principle that Indonesia is a rule of law underscores the notion that the law serves as a protective mechanism for its citizens. When a crime is committed, the law provides a framework for addressing grievances, and citizens are expected to adhere to legal procedures rather than taking matters into their own hands. However, in reality, there are instances where individuals or groups resort to *eigenrichting*, acting as judge and executioner outside the legal system ([Rinaldi et al., 2022](#)).

The concept of *eigenrichting* is closely related to the illegal nature of certain actions, especially when it comes to crimes. Often, the victims of crimes seek immediate redress for the harm they have suffered, leading them to bypass legal channels. Instead of waiting for law enforcement agencies, such as the police or prosecutors, to act, victims or community members may choose to administer their form of justice ([Asmarawati, 2020](#)). This behavior, however, is illegal and undermines the legal system.

Recent reports highlight several incidents of *eigenrichting* in Indonesia. For instance, in the Bireuen area of Aceh, a man suspected of kidnapping was beaten by a mob, only for it to later be revealed that the child with him was his own ([Danirandi, 2017](#)). Similarly, in Julok, East Aceh, a viral video depicted the arrest of a couple accused of *khalwat*, which later turned out to involve a police officer from Julok Police Headquarters ([Setyadi, 2018](#)).

Such acts of violence and mistreatment often stem from uncontrolled mass emotions. It is crucial to recognize that when the public takes the law into their own hands, they are often incited by provocateurs who fuel anger and provoke negative actions. This mob mentality tends to escalate quickly, especially when the accused is caught in the act, leading to swift and often violent reprisals.

Despite the illegality of such actions, some argue that swift action by the masses is necessary for social control. Social control is a normative aspect of social life, defining and responding to deviant behavior, and establishing what is right or

wrong within a community. In some cases, communities may justify eigenrichting as a form of social control, especially in areas where local customs and norms strongly influence behavior (Payana et al., 2020).

In Aceh province, eigenrichting has been observed in cases involving khalwat. Khalwat is considered a moral transgression in Islamic law and is also against the prevailing customs in the region (David Kloos, 2014). The community often views eigenrichting as a necessary measure to impose sanctions on khalwat perpetrators. The actions taken range from public humiliation, such as parading the perpetrators around the village, to more severe punishments like dousing them with sewage water or physical beatings (Rahmatillah & Bustamam, 2021).

The prevalence of eigenrichting (vigilante justice) in West Aceh can be attributed to several factors, including the public's limited understanding of formal legal procedures. Although local authorities may issue warnings to prevent such actions, these measures are often insufficient. In cases where warnings are ignored, customary sanctions may be imposed; however, these sanctions are also frequently disregarded, allowing incidents of eigenrichting to persist.

To understand this phenomenon more conceptually, it is necessary to elaborate on the relationship between customary norms, Islamic law, and state law in Aceh. These three normative systems do not operate within a rigid hierarchy nor are they fully autonomous. Instead, they exist in a productive tension and overlap, which scholars refer to as legal pluralism. Customary norms in West Aceh, which are deeply imbued with Islamic values, are often perceived by the community as being closer to substantive justice than the procedural nature of state law. State law, through its formal criminal justice apparatus, tends to view eigenrichting as a legal violation, whereas customary and Islamic law, in certain contexts, may justify swift retributive actions to preserve honor or maintain local order. This lack of clear normative boundaries, regarding when an act is considered prohibited eigenrichting under state law versus justified under customary religious norms, creates a space of ambiguity that perpetuates vigilante practices. Thus, the failure of local authorities' response is not merely procedural, but also reflects the absence of a coherent integrative mechanism among these three legal systems.

This research specifically examines and analyzes public perceptions of eigenrichting actions against khalwat perpetrators in West Aceh District, and identifies the factors that contribute to such actions.

METHOD

This study employs qualitative research, specifically empirical legal research, to examine both the legal provisions applicable to *eigenrichting* and the realities of its practice within society. The research focuses on West Aceh District, where data on vigilantism against *khalwat* perpetrators is prevalent. Primary data were collected through field research, involving interviews and observations of community responses to *khalwat* cases. Secondary data includes legal materials such as Article 170 of the Criminal Code concerning violence, and Article 23 concerning seclusion in Qanun Aceh Number 6 of 2014 on Jinayat Law. Additionally, legal literature, law journals, and relevant research studies provided further context and insights into the legal and social dynamics surrounding *eigenrichting* in West Aceh.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Eigenrichting

Vigilantism, commonly referred to in the broader community and mass media as "mass trials," "mass judgments," "street courts," "people's courts," "mass riots," "mass anarchism," or "mass brutality," is derived from the Dutch term "*Eigenrichting*." This term translates to "taking the law into your own hands," and refers to the act of exercising rights without respecting the law, without government knowledge, and without the use of official government power. Acts of *eigenrichting* almost invariably involve violations of others' rights and represent a serious threat to the legal system that must be addressed immediately. If left unchecked, *eigenrichting* can erode public civility and undermine the rule of law. While the legal system upholds human rights, *eigenrichting* is fundamentally an act that violates these rights.

Eigenrichting does not arise solely from individual emotional factors, such as anger or a thirst for immediate revenge. Instead, it is fundamentally rooted in broader social structures and community norms. From a sociological perspective, the practice can be understood as a product of the interplay between (1) weak or distrusted state legal institutions, (2) deeply embedded customary (*adat*) values that prioritize swift, restorative justice, and (3) a public interpretation of Islamic law that, in certain contexts, appears to justify direct action. Consequently, public perceptions of *eigenrichting* are not merely "positive" or "negative" in a binary sense. Rather, they exist along a spectrum shaped by structural conditions: where state law is seen as illegitimate or ineffective, *eigenrichting* gains positive legitimacy as a form of "people's justice"; conversely, where state authority is strong and trusted, *eigenrichting* is perceived negatively as a threat to legal order. This ambivalence reflects a deeper normative contestation among *adat*, Islam, and

state law, rather than a simple misunderstanding of societal norms. (Payana et al., 2020).

Positive Aspect: Some members of the community view crime through a societal lens, taking into account the background and circumstances surrounding the crime. These views are often based on cooperation with security forces and official law enforcement, with the aim of using punishment to educate and raise awareness among perpetrators. This approach considers the reasons behind the crime and focuses on rehabilitation.

Negative Aspect: Conversely, the negative aspect is characterized by immediate and emotionally driven reactions. This perspective is rooted in local, unofficial decisions within the community, and views punishment as a form of retribution, often involving flogging, coercion, and revenge. This approach rarely considers the background or motives behind the crime.

In contemporary Indonesia, most people view eigenrichting as a shameful and reprehensible act. However, the Indonesian Criminal Code does not specifically regulate eigenrichting. Indonesia adheres to the principle of legality, as stated in Article 1, Paragraph (1) of the Criminal Code: "An act cannot be punished unless it is based on existing criminal legislation." Eigenrichting involves the implementation of sanctions, yet it is difficult to measure the severity of these sanctions when carried out by individuals or groups, as mob actions can often become wild and uncontrollable.

This does not mean, however, that the Criminal Code cannot be applied in cases of vigilante justice. Victims of eigenrichting can report such actions to the appropriate authorities under the following legal provisions:

a. Article 351 of the Criminal Code: Concerning Persecution

Article 351 regulates maltreatment, which is punishable by imprisonment for up to two years and eight months, or by a maximum fine of IDR 4,500. If the maltreatment results in serious injury, the penalty increases to a maximum of five years' imprisonment, and if it results in death, the punishment can be up to seven years' imprisonment. However, in cases of vigilante actions, these punishments cannot be imposed without proper legal proceedings, meaning that acts of maltreatment must be addressed through legal channels to be punishable.

b. Article 170 of the Criminal Code: Concerning Violence

Article 170 prohibits the use of force against people or property, especially when done openly and collectively. Paragraph (1) prescribes a maximum imprisonment of five years and six months. If the violence results in additional consequences, such as the destruction of property or injury, the penalties increase under Paragraph (2), with imprisonment of up to seven years for destruction or

injury, up to nine years for serious injury, and up to twelve years if the violence results in death.

These two articles are typically invoked to prosecute vigilante actions. Both the use of collective force in public and the crime of maltreatment are classified as "complaint offenses" (*klacht delicten*). According to Samidjo, a complaint offense is one that can only be prosecuted if the injured party files a complaint, enabling the prosecutor to initiate legal proceedings. Lamintang similarly notes that *klacht delicten* requires a complaint from the harmed party for prosecution to occur (Sriwidodo, 2019).

It is important to note that if the police intervene during an act of *eigenrichting*, their presence does not automatically grant them the authority to prosecute those involved. Legal proceedings against the perpetrators of *eigenrichting* can only proceed if a complaint is filed by the injured party, which in this case would be the alleged criminal who became a victim of vigilante justice, or their family. Thus, the victims of *eigenrichting* are not only victims of law enforcement failures but also victims of the legal system itself.

The difficulty in measuring the severity of sanctions imposed by individuals or groups is closely related to the concept of *eigenrichting* (Efendi, 2020), which involves acts of vigilantism often carried out in public and can lead to public disorder. Since *eigenrichting* typically occurs in the presence of an audience and may escalate into uncontrolled actions by the masses, it is classified as a crime against public order.

Khalwat

The term *khalwat* originates from the Arabic word *khulwah*, which is derived from the root *khala*, meaning "quiet" or "lonely." In its original context, *khalwat* refers to a state of being alone and isolated from others, often for the purpose of worship or connecting with *al-Khalik* (Yusna, 2020).

In the context of this discussion, however, *khalwat* refers to a situation where a man and a woman, who are not *mahram* (close relatives with whom marriage is forbidden), are alone together in a place where they cannot be seen by others. According to Imam al-Nawawi, it is forbidden for a non-*mahram* man and woman to be alone together without a third person present, based on the consensus of the *ulama* (Islamic scholars). A similar explanation is given by Al-Yasa' Abu Bakar, who defines *khalwat* as an act where two or more people of the opposite sex, without marital ties or *mahram* relations, are together in a secluded place (Berutu, 2017)(Bukhari, 2019).

More specifically, *khalwat* is described as an act where two or more individuals of the opposite sex, who are not married or *mahram*, are in a secluded

location that provides the opportunity for immoral acts, such as sexual activity or adultery, to occur. Islam strictly prohibits adultery, and khalwat is considered a means (*wasilah*) that could lead to adultery. Therefore, khalwat itself is regarded as a criminal act (*jarimah*) and is subject to '*uqubat ta'zir* (discretionary punishment under Islamic law).

From a legal standpoint, the concept of khalwat is not entirely new, as similar acts are addressed in the decency regulations of the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP). Despite the controversies surrounding it, this colonial-era Criminal Code has long regulated matters of public decency. In Qanun No. 14/2003, *khalwat* is defined as an act of seclusion between two or more individuals of the opposite sex who are not mahram or do not have marital ties (Bukhari et al., 2023). This definition aligns with the explanation in the Qanun *Jinayah* (Islamic Criminal Law in Aceh), where *khalwat* is described as the act of being in a closed or hidden place with a person of the opposite sex who is not a mahram and without marital ties, which could lead to adultery (*zina*).

Acts of *khalwat* are explicitly prohibited by Article 4 of the Qanun *Jinayah*, which further stipulates that no one is permitted to engage in khalwat. Moreover, any individual, community group, government official, or business entity is also prohibited from facilitating or protecting individuals who commit khalwat. This regulation clearly applies to all levels of society, not just specific individuals.

In essence, the community views *khalwat* as an act that brings disgrace to the village. However, the public is often unaware of the provisions of criminal law and other regulations contained within the Aceh *Jinayah* Qanun, even though this qanun outlines the procedures for resolving khalwat offenses. The lack of socialization and education from relevant authorities regarding the enforcement of the Qanun *Jinayah*, particularly in dealing with khalwat cases, has contributed to the rise of vigilante violence.

Factors Behind the Occurrence of Eigenrichting Actions Against *Khalwat* Perpetrators in West Aceh

Eigenrichting refers to arbitrary actions taken by a group of people against someone who has committed a crime, in this case, the crime of khalwat, which has occurred in West Aceh. The following factors, derived from interviews with community leaders in West Aceh, have been identified as contributing to the occurrence of vigilante acts against khalwat perpetrators:

Public Distrust of Law Enforcers, A further factor potentially contributing to eigenrichting is the level of religious knowledge within the community. However, to avoid conceptual ambiguity, "limited religious knowledge" must be understood

not merely as low literacy in Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), but as a specific lack of understanding regarding procedural justice in Islamic law. Three indicators can be proposed: (1) inability to distinguish between retributive justice (qisas) which requires state or family authority, versus vigilante action which has no legal basis in syariat (Faisal Husen Ismail et al., 2022); (2) unawareness of evidentiary standards required to prove a crime under Islamic legal procedure (Asmarawati, 2020); and (3) conflation of moral outrage with religious obligation to punish. When community members lack these specific dimensions of religious knowledge, they may erroneously believe that eigenrichting is not only socially acceptable but religiously mandated (Sakti Koeswanto et al., 2023). Thus, it is not general religious illiteracy, but a targeted misunderstanding of the procedural and institutional dimensions of Islamic law, that fuels vigilante acts.

Lack of Religious Knowledge. An example of this factor can be seen in a khalwat case at a boarding house in Gampong Ujong Kalak. After discovering the khalwat perpetrators, the community immediately resorted to violence, lightly beating the offenders due to their lack of religious knowledge. If the community had a better understanding of religious teachings, they would likely have refrained from such actions and instead held deliberations to address the crime (Syahputra et al., 2023). Additionally, if the perpetrators had understood religious values, they might have avoided committing khalwat, knowing the consequences that such prohibited actions can bring, both in this world and in the hereafter.

Lack of Understanding of the Law. Many people in West Aceh have a limited understanding of the laws and regulations, which leads to a lack of awareness about legal processes. This ignorance can result from either indifference or the deliberate choice to disregard the law. Building legal awareness is challenging, as not everyone in society is receptive to legal education. The community needs institutions to help foster legal awareness. The role of law in society is vital, as it ensures justice and order (Pradanna & Irawan, 2024).

Uncontrollable Emotions. High emotional intensity can cause individuals to lose control, leading them to act impulsively when witnessing a crime. In cases of khalwat, the community may immediately take action because they cannot suppress their emotions. The arrest of a khalwat couple often turns into an exhibition of cruelty, reflecting the community's strong aversion to immoral behavior within their area. There is a fear that such acts could invite divine wrath upon their village, particularly if khalwat leads to adultery. This fear and anger drive the community to take matters into their own hands (Rahmatillah & Bustamam, 2021).

Spontaneous Act. Sometimes, vigilante actions are the result of spontaneous, hasty decisions made by the community without considering the causes or

consequences of their actions. Such impulsive behavior may be fueled by emotional reactions, peer pressure, or a desire for revenge against the perpetrators of the crime. The cause of the community taking vigilante action is because of a sense of emotion that exists within the community, another cause of the community taking vigilante action is due to encouragement given by other communities, and because they have a sense of revenge against the perpetrators of criminal acts. All of these factors are included in the factors that influence law enforcement proposed by Soejono Soekanto as quoted by [\(John Kenedi, 2017\)](#). The factor in question is the community factor in the environment where the law applies or is applied.

Of the five factors that led to the eigenrichting act against khalwat perpetrators in West Aceh, there were several reasons, including:

- a. Legal Factors: The quality of law enforcement is dependent on the quality of the legal regulations themselves. Well-crafted regulations facilitate law enforcement, whereas poorly designed regulations complicate it.
- b. Law Enforcement Factors: Law enforcement involves agencies such as the Police, the Prosecutor's Office, the Judiciary, Lawyers, and Correctional Institutions. The effectiveness of law enforcement relies heavily on the integrity and understanding of the law by the enforcers, as regulations often do not cover all scenarios and may lag behind societal developments.
- c. Resources and Infrastructure Factors: Effective law enforcement requires adequate resources and infrastructure, including financial allocations and training on relevant laws. This support is essential for enabling law enforcement officers to perform their duties effectively, particularly in areas like environmental regulation.
- d. Community Factors: The level of legal awareness within the community influences the effectiveness of law enforcement. Knowledge, understanding, and adherence to the law by the public, along with active participation in monitoring business activities, are crucial for successful law enforcement, especially regarding environmental violations.
- e. Cultural Factors: Culture functions as a guideline for behavior and as a reference in the application of legal norms within society. In the context of West Aceh, cultural values rooted in adat and Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of maintaining social harmony and resolving conflicts without creating further disorder. These values are shared across generations, although they may be expressed differently in practice. Therefore, strengthening cultural education is essential not only for the younger generation but for the community as a whole, in order to reinforce

legal awareness and encourage forms of conflict resolution that are consistent with both legal norms and social harmony.

These beliefs suggest that the community does not fully understand law enforcement procedures. Although they may think that vigilante actions will deter khalwat perpetrators, the reality on the ground shows that such cases continue to occur. This indicates a lack of adherence to existing regulations and a failure to respect government authority, as highlighted in the Quran, Surah Al-Nisa' verse 59, Meaning:

"O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allāh and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allāh and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result. (QS. Al-Nisa': 59)".

The term "*tha'ah*" in the verse implies obedience to the commands of Allah, the Messenger, and those in authority (Ulil Amri) (Hushari & Kasdi, 2014). The verse instructs believers to follow the legal decisions made by those authorized to establish laws (Shihab, 2016). The vigilante actions in West Aceh demonstrate that the community has not complied with the legal framework established by their leaders. According to Indonesian law, individuals who commit acts of violence against others can be prosecuted under Articles 170 or 351 of the Criminal Code. Perpetrators of khalwat, on the other hand, are subject to sanctions under Aceh Qanun No. 14 of 2003 or Aceh Qanun No. 6 of 2014 concerning Jinayat Law. Despite these regulations, vigilante actions against khalwat perpetrators persist, indicating a broader issue of disobedience to governmental and legal authority.

In conclusion, several factors contribute to eigenrichting against khalwat perpetrators, including public distrust of law enforcement, limited religious understanding, lack of legal awareness, emotional triggers, and spontaneous reactions. Among these, emotional and spontaneous factors are particularly prevalent, often leading to immediate vigilante responses.

Distrust toward law enforcement emerges not in isolation, but from accumulated social experiences within the community. These include perceptions of slow legal processes, inconsistency in handling similar cases, and the perceived gap between formal legal procedures and community expectations of swift and substantive justice. In some instances, when communities observe that reported cases do not lead to visible or timely outcomes, skepticism toward formal institutions increases. This pattern of experience gradually reinforces the belief that resolving cases independently is more effective, thereby normalizing eigenrichting as an alternative form of justice.

Thus, vigilante actions are not solely driven by emotional impulses, but are also shaped by socially constructed perceptions of institutional inadequacy, which continue to develop through everyday interactions between the community and law enforcement authorities.

West Acehese Perceptions of Eigenrichting Actions Against Khalwat Perpetrators

Eigenrichting refers to the arbitrary act of punishing or judging an individual without going through the proper legal process. When a crime occurs, the appropriate authorities to handle and resolve the issue are law enforcement agencies, including the police, prosecutors, and courts. However, vigilante actions (such as intimidating, physically assaulting, torturing, or even causing the death of alleged criminals) are themselves criminal acts.

One of the key reasons behind vigilante actions is the desire for revenge by individuals who have been victims of crime. Other contributing factors include uncontrolled emotions, lack of understanding, low legal awareness, and non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Often, people resort to vigilante justice because they believe that the legal system fails to deliver justice or because they distrust law enforcement officials. Those who engage in vigilante actions often feel justified in their actions, believing that they cannot be punished. They also think that their actions will deter future crimes and bring satisfaction to the community. However, this is a mistaken belief.

Under criminal law, if a victim of a crime retaliates by punishing the perpetrator in their own way (such as through intimidation, physical assault, torture, or arson, leading to the perpetrator's death) the vigilantes, whether acting individually or as part of a group, can be prosecuted based on the consequences of their actions.

In terms of public perception regarding eigenrichting in khalwat cases, such actions cannot be understood merely as spontaneous emotional reactions. While emotional responses do play a role, they are closely intertwined with dynamics of crowd psychology, social pressure, and perceived moral legitimacy within the community. In crowd situations, individual restraint tends to diminish, and actions are often shaped by collective emotions, mutual reinforcement, and the influence of certain actors who may act as provocateurs, amplifying anger and directing group behavior.

Moreover, eigenrichting is frequently perceived by segments of the community as a morally justified response, particularly when khalwat is viewed as a violation of Shari'a norms and a threat to the moral order and reputation of

the Gampong (village). This perceived moral legitimacy, combined with social pressure to conform to collective expectations, can encourage individuals to participate in or tolerate such actions, even when they conflict with formal legal provisions.

Two main forms of *eigenrichting* were identified in West Aceh District:

- a. Physical *Eigenrichting*: This includes light or severe beatings or other forms of physical abuse.
- b. Psychic *Eigenrichting*: This involves acts such as bathing the perpetrators in sewage water, immersing them in a ditch, or subjecting them to public humiliation.

In West Aceh District, the persistence of *khalwat* incidents occurred despite a foundation of consistent preventive efforts led by a unified front of village officials, local youth, and concerned residents. Interviews with various respondents established that the community did not act without warning; instead, they had repeatedly engaged in counseling, issuing advice, and delivering clear warnings to potential perpetrators against engaging in such prohibited proximity. Despite these sustained efforts to maintain moral order through dialogue and traditional authority, the advice was frequently disregarded, and the feared incidents continued to transpire. This persistent defiance on the part of the perpetrators fostered a deep sense of vulnerability and resentment within the community, as their collective attempts at peaceful deterrence were systematically ignored.

Consequently, when community members happened upon perpetrators in *flagrante delicto*, the accumulated frustration over past defiance often reached a breaking point, overwhelming rational restraint. In these high-tension moments, encountered perpetrators faced a collective psychology that had shifted from patient counseling to volatile anger. This volatility often culminated in uncontrollable mass actions of *eigenrichting*, or vigilantism, where the crowd took the law into their own hands. These explosive responses were rarely composed of rational decision-making; rather, they were spontaneous outbursts of collective anger, representing a forceful, albeit illegal, reclamation of moral authority by a community that felt its patience had been terminally exhausted.

In the aftermath of such incidents, public perception regarding these acts of vigilante justice against *khalwat* perpetrators in West Aceh remains deeply divided. This split in opinion is not purely ideological but is heavily influenced by the immediate emotional context of the event and the presence of provocateurs within the crowd, who often exploit the tension to escalate the situation beyond control. On one side of the divide, a significant portion of the populace vehemently justifies the harsh actions taken. Their rationale is rooted in the firm belief that the

perpetrators have not only violated sacred Islamic law but have also brought tangible disgrace upon the Gampong (village), thereby necessitating a severe, immediate, and communal response to purge the perceived stain on their collective honor.

Perpetrators of khalwat are typically subjected to customary sanctions or fines that have been agreed upon by the community. On the other hand, individuals involved in eigenrichting may receive warnings, especially if their actions result in serious injuries. In such cases, they may be required to treat the victim or perform *Peusijuek* (a traditional Acehnese ceremony for reconciliation). However, if the family of the victim of eigenrichting does not accept this reconciliation and reports the incident to law enforcement, the perpetrators must face the legal consequences, which could lead to a more serious judicial process.

Conversely, there is also a significant portion of the community that opposes eigenrichting against khalwat perpetrators. This group argues that such actions do not resolve the root of the problem, but instead generate new social tensions and potential conflicts. From their perspective, vigilante justice undermines social order and risks escalating violence rather than achieving sustainable resolution.

Furthermore, the five factors identified in this study should not be understood as separate and independent variables, but rather as interconnected elements that collectively shape the emergence of eigenrichting. Legal and law enforcement factors, particularly perceived weaknesses in formal institutions, contribute to declining public trust. This condition is reinforced by limited legal awareness and uneven religious understanding within the community. In such a context, cultural norms that emphasize moral order and communal responsibility provide a framework that can be interpreted as justifying immediate action.

These structural and normative conditions interact with situational triggers, especially emotional responses and crowd dynamics, which act as catalysts in specific incidents. As a result, eigenrichting emerges not simply from a single dominant factor, but from the convergence of institutional limitations, socio-cultural legitimacy, and situational pressures. This interrelation explains why vigilante actions continue to recur and are, in some cases, socially tolerated despite being in conflict with formal legal systems.

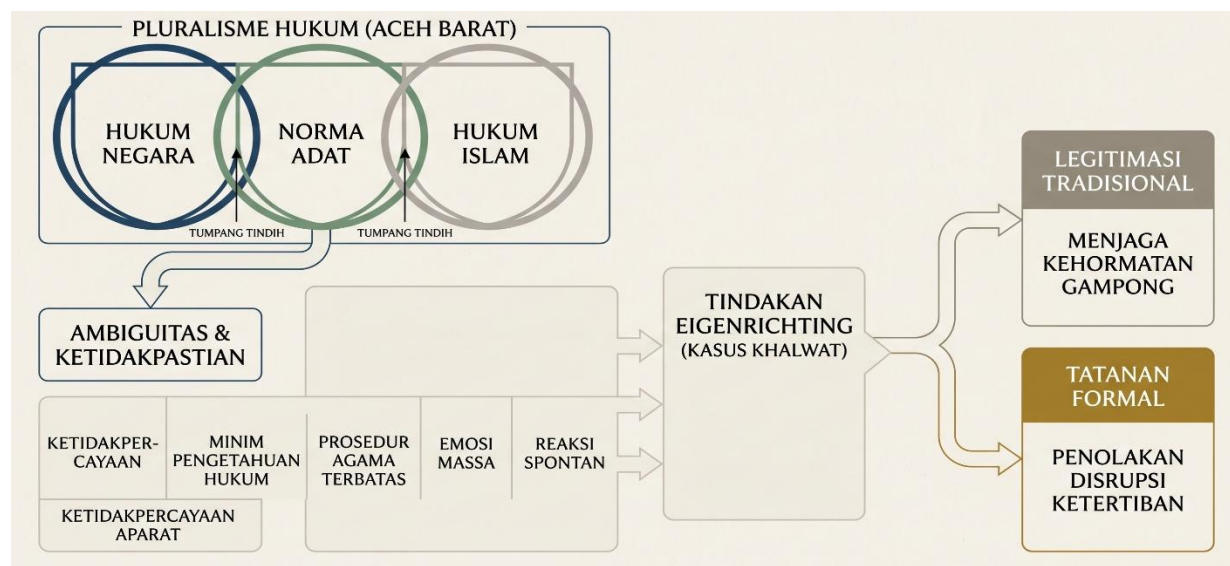


Figure 1. Novelty

The novelty of this study lies in its conceptual approach, which no longer views eigenrichting (taking the law into one's own hands) merely as an impulsive emotional reaction by citizens, but rather as a product of legal pluralism that creates a "space of ambiguity." This study highlights the existence of productive tensions and overlaps between state law, customary norms, and Islamic law in West Aceh, where normative boundaries are unclear, leading to actions outside the law often being legitimized by cultural norms to preserve the village's honor. Furthermore, this study offers new findings that the "lack of religious knowledge" that triggers violence is not a general ignorance of religious teachings, but rather a very specific misunderstanding regarding standards of proof and procedural justice in Islamic law.

The novelty of this study lies in its analysis of the five driving factors of eigenrichting (distrust of authorities, limited religious knowledge, poor legal understanding, emotions, and spontaneous reactions) not as separate variables, but as closely interconnected elements. The limitations of the state's legal institutions, combined with local sociocultural legitimacy, converge to create a polarized public perception. This structural approach comprehensively explains why acts of eigenrichting against those engaged in khalwat continue to recur and are often socially tolerated as a form of vigilante justice, even though such actions clearly contradict the formal legal system and risk creating new social conflicts.

From the social and religious perspectives, the research reveals that the phenomenon of eigenrichting (vigilante justice) in West Aceh concerning cases of khalwat is deeply rooted in the complex dynamics of legal pluralism, where customary (adat) norms, Islamic values, and state law intersect.

Sociologically, these extrajudicial actions function as a form of informal social control and swift retribution aimed at preserving community honor against perceived moral transgressions, often triggered by uncontrolled collective emotions and a profound distrust in the efficacy of formal law enforcement mechanisms. Religiously, while khalwat is recognized as a serious moral transgression, the research highlights a significant nuance: the violent communal response is frequently fueled by a lack of specific religious knowledge regarding the strict evidentiary standards and procedural justice required by Islamic law (Shari'a). This leads to an ambiguity where community members may erroneously conflate spontaneous moral outrage with a religious obligation to punish, bypassing the formal authorities prescribed by both the Qanun (local Islamic regulation) and the state legal system.

The five identified drivers of eigenrichting distrust in law enforcement, insufficient religious and legal knowledge, emotional triggers, and spontaneous reactions point to systemic gaps in managed public socialization and critical literacy programs. The study indicates that existing procedural frameworks for resolving khalwat offenses, as outlined in the Aceh Jinayah Qanun, remain ineffective at the grassroots level due to a lack of structured socialization and education by relevant authorities.

Therefore, from a strategic management standpoint, addressing this issue requires a coordinated, multi-institutional approach that goes beyond generic warnings. It necessitates the design and implementation of targeted educational strategies managed collaboratively by law enforcement, religious institutions, and customary leaders to strengthen legal awareness, foster critical procedural religious understanding, and restore public trust in formal legal channels, ultimately transforming impulsive vigilante behavior into standardized reporting protocols to the authorities.

The analysis of this research reveals significant implications about the state of legal pluralism and the effectiveness of the formal criminal justice system in West Aceh. The findings show a serious divergence between the normative legal framework, specifically Article 170 of the Indonesian Criminal Code, which prohibits extrajudicial violence, and the customary and religious norms widely practiced locally that consider khalwat as a grave violation of community honor, requiring immediate retributive measures. Furthermore, public distrust in law enforcement and widespread legal illiteracy have been identified as root causes that systematically undermine the procedural integrity of the state legal system when it fails to align with culturally specific moral orders, thus legitimizing self-administered justice (eigenrichting) as a parallel form of social control. This

paradox points to a structural failure wherein victims of mob justice, who were originally perpetrators of moral offenses, are further marginalized by a legal process that mandates their complaint for prosecution against their assailants, thereby perpetuating a cycle of extrajudicial conflict resolution.

To prevent further occurrences of *eigenrichting* in *khalwat* cases, the study highlights the need for multifaceted interventions focusing on rebuilding public trust and comprehensive educational reforms. Law enforcement agencies must adopt proactive, transparent, and swift responses when handling *khalwat* reports to restore institutional legitimacy and determine reliance on spontaneous mob actions within the community. At the same time, authorities and academic institutions should implement targeted socialization programs that bridge the community's knowledge gap regarding formal legal procedures and the specific evidentiary standards required by Islamic law (*Shari'a*), which often prohibit unlawful extrajudicial punishment. Collaborative management involving state actors, traditional community leaders (*adat*), and religious scholars is essential for establishing a legitimate, integrated dispute-resolution mechanism that ensures justice is served through authorized channels while respecting local moral values, thus transforming impulsive vigilantism into regulated adherence to the rule of law.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that acts of *eigenrichting* against perpetrators of *khalwat* in West Aceh Regency are influenced by several factors, namely the community's distrust of law enforcement, a lack of religious knowledge, a lack of understanding of the law, emotional factors, and spontaneous reactions, with emotional and spontaneous factors being the most dominant. Meanwhile, public perceptions of vigilante justice are divided into two camps: those who support it because the perpetrators are considered to have violated Islamic law and tarnished the village's reputation, and those who oppose it because such actions can actually exacerbate the problem and create new issues rather than resolving the violation that occurred.

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