

Disparities in Norms and Practices of Authority for Managing Public Street Lighting

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the legal legitimacy of the delegation of authority for managing Public Street Lighting (PJU) from the provincial government to district/city governments. This delegation often occurs without the support of clear legal norms, thus giving rise to issues of legality, accountability, and clarity of the authority structure between levels of government. This study uses a socio-legal approach with normative analysis techniques based on the legitimacy theory of French and Raven and the systemic legal theory of H.L.A. Hart. The research location focused on Pasuruan Regency. The results of the study indicate that the district government's authority in handling PJU is still functional without adequate legal legitimacy, and is not supported by a strong system of coordination and institutional recognition. This condition reflects the weak integration between the legal structure and administrative implementation, which impacts the effectiveness of services and legal certainty in PJU governance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Public Street Lighting (PSL) is an integral part of public traffic infrastructure that must be provided by the government (Econoler, 2020). In Indonesia, the implementation of PSL is governed by the division of governmental affairs as regulated under Law Number 23 of 2014 and subsequently re-mapped in Ministry of Home Affairs Regulation Number 90 of 2019, as well as Ministry of Transportation Regulation Number PM 27 of 2018 on Street Lighting. These regulations link the authority for PSL management with the type of road and the scale of administrative areas, thereby embedding PSL governance within the structure of intergovernmental responsibilities.

PSL is not merely a technical component of infrastructure but has multidimensional impacts on community life. It significantly improves road visibility, directly contributing to the safety of road users (Burattini et al., 2025; Christie, 1963; Masri et al., 2024). Adequate street lighting also plays a role in reducing the risk of crime in public spaces, thus enhancing citizens' sense of security (Chalfin et al., 2022; Welsh et al., 2022). In both social and economic terms, street lighting facilitates public access to essential services, social spaces, and local economic activities (Bystryantseva et al., 2020; Munayang & Dewi, 2024; Rajaram Bhagavathula et al., 2018). From an ecological standpoint, well-designed PSL systems can even help reduce disruption to light-sensitive insect species (Boyes et al., 2021; Burattini et al., 2025; Calnan,

2018). This highlights that PSL is not merely a matter of aesthetics but holds strategic value across multiple dimensions in improving quality of life.

Despite being regulated and playing a vital role in supporting daily activities and ensuring public safety, the implementation of PSL in Indonesia still faces numerous challenges. Public complaints often relate to malfunctioning PSL (Aulia Putri et al., 2025; Qadafi et al., 2023), non-compliance with technical standards (Qadafi et al., 2023; Supriatna et al., 2024), or even complete absence of adequate lighting in certain regions, leaving areas in darkness (Aulia Putri et al., 2025; Qadafi et al., 2023). These conditions indicate that, although PSL is legally a public service and a governmental responsibility, its implementation frequently fails to fulfill citizens' rights to functional and adequate urban infrastructure (Kurniawan & Kurniawan, 2022).

Law Number 23 of 2014 on Regional Government classifies PSL management as a concurrent governmental affair that falls under regional authority. Government Regulation Number 2 of 2018 on Minimum Service Standards further affirms that the provision and maintenance of PSL are indicators of basic services in the public works sector. Ministry of Transportation Regulation PM 27 of 2018 also outlines the technical standards for the provision and operation of PSL. Additionally, Law Number 22 of 2009 on Road Traffic and Transport mandates the government to ensure traffic safety and security, including through adequate street lighting. These various legal frameworks demonstrate that PSL provision is not merely an administrative option but a constitutional obligation that must be implemented systematically, structurally, and in coordination across levels of government.

However, the division of responsibility for PSL implementation among national, provincial, and district/municipal governments has led to overlapping authorities. Provincial governments often delegate PSL management of provincial roads to district or municipal governments without clear legal foundations, obscuring the lines of administrative and budgetary responsibility. While Law 23/2014 outlines the division of authority based on scale and scope of service, it does not specifically regulate the technical aspects of delegation for infrastructure such as PSL, which frequently spans multiple administrative jurisdictions. Ministry of Home Affairs Regulation 90/2019 and its supplement, Decree 050-5889/2021, which classify and codify regional development planning, also fail to explicitly provide collaborative mechanisms for inter-regional PSL management. As a result, many regions are uncertain whether to manage PSL based on administrative boundaries or road classification. In the absence of clear operational and legal guidelines, PSL management becomes vulnerable to bureaucratic neglect, budgetary disputes, and weak accountability between levels of government.

The decentralization framework under Law 23/2014 emphasizes the division of governmental functions based on scale and the nature of public services. Ideally, services like PSL should be assigned to the most appropriate level of government to ensure effective and efficient management. However, in practice, this principle often encounters obstacles due to fragmented regulations between institutions and government levels. The lack of harmony in norms and policy implementation contributes to authority conflicts that directly impede public service effectiveness (Purwanto, 2015). Such conflicts not only delay infrastructure repairs and development—particularly for PSL—but also create uncertainty regarding which actors are responsible for maintaining public safety-related infrastructure.

These issues reflect a weak integration between policy design and institutional capacity at the regional level. When the delegation of authority lacks clear operational norms and institutional support, public services like PSL fall into a grey area within the governance structure. On one hand, provincial governments are perceived to bear macro-responsibility for infrastructure spanning multiple districts or cities; on the other hand, district or municipal governments are more proximate, both spatially and administratively, to the community's immediate needs. This ambiguity hampers coordination, budgeting, and technical execution, ultimately degrading service quality and increasing public safety risks.

Moreover, unclear authority complicates accountability processes. When maintenance responsibilities for PSL are not clearly outlined in regulations or interagency agreements, the public is left uncertain about whom to contact for repairs or urgent lighting issues. In the long term, this weakens

public trust in local governments and undermines governance indicators related to responsiveness, transparency, and effectiveness in public service delivery.

This study analyses how legitimacy issues arise in the delegation of PSL management authority from provincial to district/municipal governments. Although such delegation often occurs in practice, it is frequently not accompanied by clear legal justification, raising questions about the legality, accountability, and clarity of intergovernmental authority relations. When PSL is implemented by district/municipal governments but the formal responsibility remains at the provincial level, overlapping authority may jeopardize legal certainty and hinder the effectiveness of public service delivery.

Specifically, this study aims to examine how PSL management authority is regulated within Indonesia's legal framework, and how such authority is delegated from provincial to district or municipal governments in practice.

This research employs H.L.A. Hart's theory of systemic law and the legitimacy theory of John R.P. French and Bertram Raven. Hart's theory is used to evaluate whether the delegation of authority occurs within a consistent, structured legal system with clear rules—as required for a functioning legal system (Hart, 1997). French and Raven's legitimacy theory is applied to assess whether the actors exercising such authority possess adequate legitimacy—through formal position (legitimate power), recognized expertise (expert power), or supportive social relations (referent power) (French & Raven, 1959). The combination of these two theories allows for a comprehensive examination of authority, considering both its normative legality and the practical recognition necessary in public administration.

Previous studies on PSL have focused primarily on technical improvements, such as innovations in energy-efficient lighting, the use of automatic sensors, and remote monitoring systems for operational efficiency (Omar et al., 2022; Pasolini et al., 2024; Qu et al., 2022). These approaches also align with sustainability goals by reducing ecological impacts from nighttime energy consumption (Evans, 2023; Kurniawan & Kurniawan, 2022). However, fundamental governance issues in PSL management remain underexplored in Indonesia. While earlier research has addressed institutional fragmentation (collaborative governance) and transparency in infrastructure planning (Hidayat et al., 2025; Prastiyo, 2019), few have focused specifically on PSL management. Without effective collaboration and organizational governance, progress in repairing and expanding street lighting infrastructure will remain limited.

Insights from broader social studies also stress the importance of governance and institutional arrangements. Mariati et al. (2021) highlight that social studies materials should incorporate themes of power, authority, and governance, underscoring how legitimacy and institutional dynamics shape both learning and practice. Similar dynamics can be observed in other local governance programs, such as the Sport Potential Card initiative in Bojonegoro, where transparency, accountability, and inter-institutional synergy were identified as key factors for ensuring sustainability and effectiveness (Suryohayati et al., 2025). These perspectives confirm that challenges of legitimacy and collaborative governance are not confined to PSL management, but cut across multiple sectors of regional governance.

This study offers novelty by examining the legal foundations and legitimacy of authority in PSL management. This focus is essential because problems often stem not only from technical shortcomings but also from an underdeveloped authority structure and unclear intergovernmental relationships. Another contribution lies in the use of a socio-legal approach, which is still rarely applied in PSL studies. This approach allows for a more holistic analysis, encompassing not only normative assessments of laws and regulations but also how the law functions in social and bureaucratic practice.

2. METHODS

This study adopts a socio-legal approach, viewing law not only as a system of written norms but also as a set of practices embedded in institutional and social realities. The research examines the regulation, division, and delegation of authority in the implementation of Public Street Lighting (PSL), focusing on whether such authority is both legally structured and socially recognized. The method combines normative legal analysis of relevant regulations (such as Law No. 23/2014 and ministerial regulations)

with qualitative content analysis of secondary data, including community complaint documents from 2024–2025 and academic literature. The analysis is guided by French and Raven's theory of power legitimacy and H.L.A. Hart's systemic legal theory to assess the coherence of legal norms and the legitimacy of intergovernmental authority arrangements in PSL governance.

The study was conducted in Pasuruan Regency. As a supporting area for both industrial and tourism zones, Pasuruan Regency has a high demand for adequate street lighting. However, many unlit road sections persist, especially along vital routes such as Grati–Winongan and Rejoso–Nguling, which contribute to accidents and criminal incidents. The regency has 44,405 PSL points with a budget burden of nearly IDR 900 million per month for electricity and approximately IDR 2 billion per year for maintenance. Nevertheless, many lights along national and provincial roads remain off for months due to ongoing disputes over authority between central, provincial, and regency governments, resulting in delayed repair responses.

The data used in this study are both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were obtained through interviews with the Secretary of the Department of Transportation of Pasuruan Regency, the Head of the Traffic Division at the Department of Transportation of Pasuruan Regency, the Head of the Organization Division at the Regional Secretariat of Pasuruan Regency, and the Head of the Division of Economy, Natural Resources, Infrastructure, and Regional Affairs at the Regional Development Planning, Research, and Development Agency (Bappelitbangda) of Pasuruan Regency. The secondary data include interlegislation from the national to local levels, administrative documents concerning authority delegation, and public complaint data related to PSL services. The two main documents analyzed are the 2024 Public Complaint Recap and the Public Complaint Recap from January to July 2025, which serve as sources to examine the unfulfilled street lighting services and the initial indications of institutional and legal issues underlying such public services.

The analytical technique employed is normative-conceptual policy analysis, aimed at evaluating existing legal norms in relation to the implementation of authority in the field. This approach is framed by two theoretical frameworks. First, the theory of legitimacy is used to assess whether the authority exercised by a party is based on lawful and socially accepted grounds, both in terms of regulation and public response. Second, systemic legal theory, particularly that of H.L.A. Hart, is used to deconstruct legal structures as interconnected primary and secondary norms that form institutional order. This approach enables the analysis of authority delegation through the lens of the rule of recognition and the consistency among legal norms.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

The management of Public Street Lighting (PSL) in Indonesia is governed by the decentralization framework under Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government, which links PSL authority to road management based on road classification: national, provincial, regency/municipal, or village. Government Regulation No. 34 of 2006 further affirms that road authorities are responsible for road equipment, including PSL, making each level of government accountable according to road type.

Ministerial regulations complement this framework. Regulation No. 27/PRT/M/2018 requires operational feasibility certification for every PSL unit, ensuring compliance with safety and technical standards. Regulation No. 6 of 2020 obliges local governments to record PSL as regional assets, reinforcing accountability in management and administration.

At the provincial level, East Java's Regional Regulation No. 1 of 2014 on Safe Road Management and Governor Regulation No. 69 of 2018 provide a basis for intergovernmental cooperation in maintaining road infrastructure, implicitly covering PSL. However, there is still no specific governor regulation on PSL authority, leaving villages and regency governments without clear technical guidelines when management responsibilities are ambiguous. This gap underscores the underdevelopment of detailed implementation mechanisms at the provincial level.

In Pasuruan Regency, Regional Regulation No. 12 of 2006 on Public Street Lighting serves as a specific local legal foundation for PSL management. This regulation establishes the obligation of the regency government to provide, maintain, and repair PSL on roads under local jurisdiction, and it clarifies the technical authority of the relevant local agencies. The implementation of this regulation provides a legal mechanism for Pasuruan Regency Government to manage street lighting facilities on regency roads under its jurisdiction.

Since its enactment, the Pasuruan Regency Regulation on Public Street Lighting (PSL) has not been significantly revised and remains limited to regency roads. It does not address contemporary challenges such as asset uncertainty and intergovernmental coordination. National provisions—Law No. 23 of 2014 and Government Regulation No. 34 of 2006—divide authority based on road classification, but the regency regulation only translates decentralization principles without mechanisms for engagement when PSL units are located on provincial or national roads.

Provincial regulations, including those on safe roads, have not provided explicit coordination mechanisms for PSL management between provincial and regency governments. As a result, the regency regulation stands as the only local legal basis, leaving a gap in cross-jurisdictional service delivery. This gap is evident when complaints are directed to the regency government, even though authority lies with higher levels. The lack of provincial facilitation produces weak responses and delayed action.

Community complaints from 2024 to July 2025 confirm widespread malfunctioning PSL units, particularly at strategic points such as schools, intersections, residential areas, and along provincial roads, underscoring the urgent need for regulatory harmonization across government levels as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Data of Complaints Due to PSL Issues in Pasuruan

Type of Damage	Number of Incidents	Severity Category	Location	Impact
Street lights off	528	Very High	All districts, including Bangil, Gempol, Rembang	Low night visibility, increased risk of accidents and crime
Lights on during the day, off at night	17	Medium	Sukoreno, Kebotohan Tengah, Cobanblimbing (Wonorejo)	Main function not operating, energy waste
Street light cables cut	32	High	Kalikunting, Oro-Oro Ombo Kulon, Randugong, Karangjati	Risk of electric shock, total lighting system failure
Poles leaning or collapsed	12	Medium	Wonorejo, Jetak Pandaan, Tambak Lemahbang Sukorejo	Accident potential, traffic disruption, further infrastructure damage
Armature/contacter damaged or missing	6	Low–Medium	Bandaran Winongan, Kampung Baru Grati	Reduced light intensity, potential for partial blackout
Panels burnt or short-circuited	4	Low	Karanganyar Kraton, Tanjung Wonorejo	Fire risk, disruption of the entire system
Traffic lights (APILL) not functioning	14	Medium	ST Bangil, Patung Sapi Pandaan, Sedarum Nguling	Traffic disorder, high potential for accidents
PSL damaged by lightning	9	Low–Medium	Kalirejo Gondangwetan,	Sudden system disruption, difficult to

	Genengwaru Rembang	predict, requires immediate repair
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Damage to Public Street Lighting (PSL) in Pasuruan Regency shows a high level of urgency, most notably marked by the widespread occurrence of streetlights going out. Based on a compilation of community complaints from 2024 to mid-2025, there were 528 reports of non-functioning streetlights, spread across almost all districts. This phenomenon indicates that the maintenance and monitoring system for PSL is not functioning optimally. The impact is tangible, particularly in the form of drastically reduced nighttime visibility, which increases the risk of traffic accidents and creates a sense of insecurity for road users and nearby residents.

In addition to complete outages, another dominant technical issue is the disconnection of PSL cables, with a total of 32 reports. This damage is often caused by fallen trees, lightning strikes, or weaknesses in the underground cable installation system. Such conditions not only result in lighting outages but also pose an electrical hazard to the public, especially when exposed cables are present in open areas. Likewise, nine reported PSL damages were caused by lightning strikes, further reinforcing the indication that the electrical system for street lighting in Pasuruan lacks adequate protection against extreme weather disturbances.

There were also 17 reports of PSL functioning incorrectly—lighting during the day and turning off at night. This malfunction is usually caused by faulty automatic control systems or misconfigured timers. Although it may seem minor, the consequences of this type of damage are significant in terms of wasted electricity and the loss of lighting at times when it is most needed. This phenomenon is an indicator of weak technical management of the lighting system, particularly in terms of calibrating and maintaining the automation components.

Physical damage is also part of the PSL problems in Pasuruan, as seen in 12 incidents of leaning or fallen streetlight poles. These not only disrupt the aesthetics and function of the roadway but also pose serious safety risks to road users. Several reports indicated that tilted poles were caused by traffic accidents or weak foundations, both of which could have been prevented through regular inspections and better infrastructure arrangements. Additionally, six reports involved damaged armatures or electrical contractors, and four cases involved short circuits or fires, revealing weaknesses in the electrical safety system and a lack of oversight over vital lighting components.

Beyond the PSL system, complaints also targeted traffic control devices or APILL (traffic lights), with 14 cases of malfunction. These issues occurred at several vital points, such as intersections and major roads. In the context of traffic safety, APILL malfunctions are a serious problem that can cause congestion, disorder, and even accidents. This indicates that the issues extend beyond street lighting to the broader traffic control system.

The even distribution of incidents across districts—including Bangil, Gempol, Rembang, and Pandaan—suggests a broader problem at the provincial level. The large number of unresolved damage reports points to structural barriers that are not limited to the regency level but also involve coordination and the division of responsibilities between regency and provincial governments. As is known, provincial and national roads that pass through Pasuruan Regency are also common sites of complaints, but the responsibility for their lighting is often unclear, leading to delays in repairs—or the absence of any action at all.

The delegation of authority for Public Street Lighting (PSL) under Law No. 23 of 2014 and Government Regulation No. 34 of 2006 has not been effectively implemented in Pasuruan Regency. Although these regulations permit delegation based on efficiency and accessibility, the absence of clear legal instruments governing procedures and coordination hampers operationalization. This gap is reflected in frequent public complaints, with residents often unsure of the responsible authority. In practice, regency officials sometimes refuse action on provincial roads, while the provincial government lacks an accessible complaint system, producing inefficiency and weakening institutional legitimacy.

From Hart's theory of legal systems, the issue reflects the absence of a recognized rule of recognition, leaving authority over PSL ambiguous. The refusal of regency officials to act outside their jurisdiction underscores the fragility of normative structures that should ensure intergovernmental cooperation. Meanwhile, French and Raven's theory of legitimacy shows that formal authority alone is insufficient. Provincial governments hold legal authority, but regency personnel and technical resources are often relied upon without supporting delegation mechanisms, undermining both functional and social legitimacy.

Field practice reveals that regency officers, as the first point of contact for citizens, face an ambiguous role: expected to respond to public needs but lacking both legal authority and resources. The absence of structured coordination erodes trust, creating a legitimacy vacuum. Legally, authority rests with the province, yet socially the public expects regency governments to act.

Field practice reveals that regency officers, as the first point of contact for citizens, occupy an ambiguous role. Regency governments are the first recipients of public complaints on PSL, but their authority is limited to regency roads. When the provincial government is slow to respond, they sometimes step in using their own budget.

Public complaints are submitted through the call center ... compiled to be prioritized. ... For PSL outside the regency's authority, complaints are forwarded to the competent authority, but if the response is delayed or absent, the regency will take corrective action using its available budget. (Mokhammad Yasin as Head of Traffic Division, Department of Transportation, Pasuruan Regency, interview, August 19, 2025)

This shows that although regency governments lack a formal mandate, they still take action to meet urgent needs. Their role is socially expected but legally constrained, creating tension between responsiveness and legality.

Officials acknowledge that PSL management on provincial or national roads lies outside the regency's authority. By law, regency governments should not perform tasks that belong to other levels of government.

Ideally, regency governments should not carry out provincial tasks, and vice versa. From the regulatory perspective, we do not allow provincial authority to be carried out by regency governments regardless of the urgency. (Zaki Yamani as Head of Organization Division, Regional Secretariat, interview, August 19, 2025)

The statement shows that even regency officials themselves recognize the legal boundaries that prevent them from acting beyond their jurisdiction. Hart's systemic legal theory helps explain why such actions, although factually implemented, remain legally invalid: they are not grounded in a recognized secondary rule that validates the authority to act. In practice, regency governments sometimes perform repairs on provincial roads out of necessity and public pressure, but because no formal delegation mechanism exists, these interventions cannot be reported or financed within the official budgeting system. This produces a structural inconsistency—administrative practices aimed at satisfying urgent social needs coexist with a legal framework that denies their validity. The result is a "grey zone" of governance where regency actions provide temporary relief but simultaneously erode systemic legitimacy by blurring the boundaries of lawful authority.

Officials' acknowledgment of these legal boundaries underscores the rigidity of institutional arrangements, but this rigidity does not align with realities on the ground. While provincial governments hold formal authority, they remain distant from everyday service interactions. This disconnect leaves the regency government positioned as the most visible and accessible actor in the eyes of citizens.

The community does not recognize these jurisdictional divisions. For them, the regency government is the closest authority and therefore the one responsible for ensuring PSL functions properly.

The public does not care how complicated the resolution of overlapping authority is; they only want their essential needs to be met properly. (Nurul Hudayati as Secretary of Department of Transportation, interview, August 19, 2025)

This contrast illustrates the distinction between institutional legality and social legitimacy. The province retains legitimate power through its legal mandate, yet it fails to exercise referent or expert power because of its lack of presence at the community level. Conversely, the regency acquires social legitimacy through visibility and responsiveness, but without the legal foundation that would confer full legitimate power. The tension between these two forms of recognition produces the legitimacy vacuum observed in PSL governance. As stated by another informant:

the system has locked the authority of the transportation agency in such a way that it cannot perform tasks outside its jurisdiction. (Rinawati Ngarofah as Head of Economic, Natural Resources, Infrastructure, and Regional Division, Bappelitbangda, interview, August 19, 2025)

This statement confirms that institutional mechanisms such as SIPD reinforce the boundaries of legal authority, leaving no flexibility for regency governments to respond beyond their scope. Even when public necessity pressures them to act, the absence of a recognized delegation mechanism prevents such actions from gaining legal or financial validity. In Hart's systemic legal theory, this represents the absence of a secondary rule of recognition, highlighting the gap between administrative practices and normative legality.

3.2. Discussion

The delegation of public street lighting (PSL) management authority from provincial to regency/municipal governments can only be considered valid if conducted in accordance with the prevailing laws and regulations. Law Number 23 of 2014 on Regional Government and Government Regulation Number 34 of 2006 on Roads stipulate that authority division is based on road classification and the principle of service effectiveness. Partial delegation of authority—such as the management of PSL on provincial roads located within regency/municipal areas—is permitted through formal mechanisms such as regional head regulations, memoranda of understanding, or cooperation agreements. The legal basis for this is reinforced by the principle of delegated legislation, which requires that any delegation of public affairs must adhere to the principle of legality and clarity of authority source (Al-Fatih et al., 2023).

The legitimacy of delegated authority is measured not only by its formal legality but also by the normative and social recognition of the actors receiving the delegation. The social power theory of French and Raven (1959) emphasizes that legitimate power emerges when the public or subordinates believe the authority figure has the rightful claim to govern or issue commands. In the context of PSL delegation, the public and local officials must perceive that the delegated actors—whether regents, subdistrict heads, or technical agencies—hold a legitimate legal basis and authority to manage the system. Baaij (2019) asserts that power only achieves full legitimacy when exercised by actors who bear a formal mandate and are socially recognized, particularly in public services that directly affect communities.

French and Raven's power theory shows that PSL governance in Pasuruan Regency reflects a split in the bases of power. The provincial government holds legitimate power through its legal mandate, but it fails to exercise referent or expert power because it is distant from citizens and unresponsive to complaints. By contrast, the regency government acquires referent and expert power by being the first point of contact and possessing the technical capacity to respond, yet it lacks legitimate power because no formal delegation exists. This imbalance explains why neither level of government achieves full legitimacy in the eyes of the community.

Hart's systemic legal theory clarifies the institutional roots of this gap. The absence of a recognized secondary rule—particularly a rule of recognition that authorizes regency governments to manage PSL on provincial roads—means that regency interventions, even when socially expected and technically necessary, remain systemically invalid. At the same time, provincial authority, although legally valid,

loses legitimacy when it is not accompanied by effective recognition and compliance among both officials and citizens.

The findings reveal a “dual vacuum” of legitimacy: regency governments are socially accepted but legally unauthorized, while provincial governments are legally recognized but socially unacknowledged. This disconnect weakens legal certainty, erodes public trust, and underscores the urgent need for regulatory harmonization and formal delegation mechanisms in PSL governance.

Regency-level officers often cannot act on reports of damaged PSL because they regard it as under provincial jurisdiction. When the public is unaware of who is responsible for PSL maintenance, the legitimacy of authority erodes, and trust in government declines. French and Raven (1959) describe this as the loss of referent, expert, and coercive power—when an authority is no longer supported by trust, expertise, or the capacity to regulate effectively.

The legal force of delegated authority must also be examined through the lens of systemic legal theory developed by H.L.A. Hart (1961). A valid law is not only one that is enacted but also one recognized by both the public and public officials through a rule of recognition. Without a recognition rule that acknowledges such delegation, technical actions taken by regency governments concerning provincial PSL matters lack a valid basis within the legal system, even if carried out *de facto*. Hart emphasizes that the law functions as a system only when each of its elements occupies a normatively recognized position, and compliance arises not from coercion but from belief in the rule’s validity (Hart, 2012).

Cohherence between formal legality and social legitimacy is the key to successful delegation. PSL delegation without formal documentation is not only legally risky but also fails to gain social recognition from the community and technical implementers. Contemporary public administration literature affirms that institutional effectiveness and bureaucratic compliance can only be achieved if authority delegation is structurally arranged, accompanied by reporting systems, budgetary support, and formal supervision grounded in legal norms (Adjei & Adu-Gyamfi, 2022; Rana et al., 2019).

The absence of formal delegation also creates a gap between legal norms and administrative realities on the ground. Provincial governments retain authority over PSL on specific road segments but lack direct access to conditions in the regency areas. Meanwhile, regency governments have the capacity and resources but lack the legal authority to act. This situation results in overlapping responsibilities and distances PSL management from the principles of efficiency and responsiveness as demanded by the regional autonomy system.

This dynamic is not exclusive to Pasuruan. Similar patterns have been documented in other decentralized governance contexts, where local governments assume a *de facto* service provider role despite lacking a formal mandate. Dzacaklo et al. (2023) shows that in Ghana’s decentralized service delivery system, frontline governments often act outside their formal jurisdiction because citizens perceive them as the most accessible authority.

A similar dynamic has been observed in other regions. A study conducted in a provincial capital in Kalimantan found that while local governments managed technical and financial aspects of street lighting improvements, legal and institutional frameworks remained weak. The local authorities had to rely on informal mechanisms and energy efficiency initiatives despite lacking formal legal clarity or delegated authority. This situation shows how local governments often operate in a *de facto* capacity without legal certainty, mirroring Pasuruan’s reality where social legitimacy is earned through responsiveness but not matched with formal authority (Kurniawan & Kurniawan, 2022).

These studies confirm that the tension observed in Pasuruan where regency governments gain social legitimacy without legal recognition, while provincial governments retain legal authority without social acceptance is not unique. Rather, it reflects a broader challenge in multilevel governance, where legitimacy is fractured unless both legal and social dimensions of authority are institutionally aligned.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the governance of Public Street Lighting (PSL) in Pasuruan Regency exposes a persistent disjunction between the formal legal framework and administrative practices. National and regional regulations already provide the normative basis for authority distribution, yet the lack of explicit delegation and recognition mechanisms creates a dual vacuum of legitimacy. Regency governments, as the closest point of service, gain social legitimacy through responsiveness and technical capacity, but their actions remain legally unauthorized. Conversely, provincial governments retain legal authority but fail to secure social recognition because they are distant from citizens and often unresponsive to complaints. This fractured legitimacy erodes public trust and reduces the certainty of law in practice.

French and Raven's power theory clarifies how legitimacy weakens when legal authority is not supported by referent and expert power, while Hart's systemic legal theory demonstrates that the absence of a rule of recognition renders regency interventions systemically invalid. Together, these perspectives explain why PSL governance remains institutionally ambiguous and socially contested. The findings indicate that governance effectiveness in decentralized systems cannot rely solely on formal legality but must also integrate mechanisms that generate social recognition.

This study offers a novel contribution to the discourse on Public Street Lighting (PSL) governance in Indonesia, particularly through the combined application of legitimacy theory and systemic legal theory. Nonetheless, the study has limitations. The study is geographically confined to Pasuruan Regency, making its findings most applicable to similar conditions. Unless similar dynamics are found elsewhere, the results should be applied cautiously in other regions, guided by the principle of research transferability, which considers legal, institutional, administrative, and socio-economic contexts.

Building on these findings and acknowledging the study's limitations, this study proposes a set of recommendations for reforming PSL governance in Pasuruan Regency. Technical task division must be anchored in the legal classification of assets and administrative areas, with each PSL unit clearly documented in terms of ownership, managing agency, and party responsible for repairs. This clarity should be reinforced by the principle of legitimate power, ensuring that technical implementers are not only legally recognized by higher-level institutions but also socially accepted by the community. Without such recognition, administrative actions in the field will continue to operate in a legal and social gray area.

Support for authority delegation must also be strengthened through adequate resource allocation, technical capacity building, and fair incentive systems. Provincial and regency governments should jointly secure budget availability, provide structured officer training, and establish performance-based rewards. These measures will equip and motivate field implementers, while simultaneously reinforcing expert, coercive, and referent power as outlined in French and Raven's legitimacy theory. Absent this institutional support, delegation risks degenerating into an administrative burden without functional or social recognition.

Future research should adopt a broader comparative design to test whether similar patterns of fractured legitimacy appear in other regions. Quantitative analysis of service delivery outcomes and citizen satisfaction could also complement the qualitative insights presented here.

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