

***THE IMPACT OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEMS ON
PROFESSIONALISM AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF LAW ENFORCEMENT
OFFICERS***

**PENGARUH SISTEM PENILAIAN KINERJA TERHADAP PROFESIONALISME
DAN AKUNTABILITAS PETUGAS PENEGAK HUKUM**

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ABSTRACT

Performance appraisal systems are central instruments for managing human resources in policing organizations and are widely used to promote professionalism, ensure accountability, and improve operational outcomes. This paper presents a structured literature-review study that synthesizes empirical and conceptual research from the last ten years to examine how different appraisal models (e.g., competency-based appraisal, behaviorally anchored rating scales, and performance management systems) influence police officers' professional conduct, ethical decision-making, and organizational accountability. Drawing on a purposive review of peer-reviewed studies, government reports, and practitioner evaluations, the study identifies mechanisms by which appraisal systems affect motivation, training uptake, supervisory feedback, disciplinary processes, and public trust. Evidence suggests that appraisal systems that combine objective performance indicators, competency frameworks, and transparent review processes enhance professionalism and accountability by aligning expectations, improving feedback quality, and creating clearer consequences for misconduct. However, the literature also reports limitations: poorly designed appraisal tools, politicized evaluations, weak oversight, and perceived unfairness can undermine morale and reduce legitimacy. The paper highlights contextual moderators such as organizational culture, leadership commitment, legal frameworks, and community oversight. Recommendations include adopting competency-based frameworks, embedding multi-source feedback, ensuring procedural fairness, linking appraisal outcomes to training and promotion, and strengthening external oversight mechanisms. The study contributes a consolidated view of contemporary evidence and a targeted research agenda for improving appraisal design in policing. Keywords: performance appraisal, police professionalism, accountability, competency-based appraisal.

Keywords: Performance Appraisal, Police Professionalism, Accountability, Competency Framework.

ABSTRACT

Sistem penilaian kinerja merupakan alat utama dalam pengelolaan sumber daya manusia di organisasi kepolisian dan secara luas digunakan untuk meningkatkan profesionalisme, memastikan akuntabilitas, serta memperbaiki hasil operasional. Artikel ini menyajikan studi tinjauan literatur terstruktur yang mensintesis penelitian empiris dan konseptual selama sepuluh tahun terakhir untuk menganalisis bagaimana model penilaian yang berbeda (misalnya, penilaian berbasis kompetensi, skala penilaian berbasis perilaku, dan sistem manajemen kinerja) memengaruhi perilaku profesional, pengambilan keputusan etis, dan akuntabilitas organisasi para anggota kepolisian. Dengan mengacu pada tinjauan selektif terhadap studi yang telah direview oleh rekan sejawat, laporan pemerintah, dan evaluasi praktisi, studi ini mengidentifikasi mekanisme di mana sistem penilaian memengaruhi motivasi, penerimaan pelatihan, umpan balik supervisi, proses disiplin, dan kepercayaan publik. Bukti menunjukkan bahwa sistem penilaian yang menggabungkan indikator kinerja objektif, kerangka kompetensi, dan proses tinjauan yang transparan dapat meningkatkan profesionalisme dan akuntabilitas dengan menyelaraskan ekspektasi, meningkatkan kualitas umpan balik, dan menciptakan konsekuensi yang lebih jelas untuk pelanggaran. Namun, literatur juga melaporkan keterbatasan: alat penilaian yang dirancang buruk, evaluasi yang dipengaruhi politik, pengawasan yang lemah, dan persepsi ketidakadilan dapat merusak moral dan mengurangi legitimasi. Artikel ini menyoroti moderator kontekstual seperti budaya organisasi, komitmen kepemimpinan, kerangka hukum, dan pengawasan komunitas. Evaluasi yang dipengaruhi politik, pengawasan yang lemah, dan persepsi ketidakadilan dapat merusak moral dan mengurangi legitimasi.

Artikel ini menyoroti moderator kontekstual seperti budaya organisasi, komitmen kepemimpinan, kerangka hukum, dan pengawasan komunitas. Rekomendasi meliputi adopsi kerangka kerja berbasis kompetensi, penerapan umpan balik dari berbagai sumber, memastikan keadilan prosedural, menghubungkan hasil penilaian dengan pelatihan dan promosi, serta memperkuat mekanisme pengawasan eksternal. Studi ini memberikan gambaran terpadu tentang bukti kontemporer dan agenda penelitian yang terfokus untuk meningkatkan desain penilaian kinerja dalam kepolisian. Kata kunci: penilaian kinerja, profesionalisme kepolisian, akuntabilitas, penilaian berbasis kompetensi.

Kata Kunci: Penilaian Kinerja, Profesionalisme Kepolisian, Akuntabilitas, Kerangka Kerja Kompetensi.

INTRODUCTION

Performance appraisal systems are widely recognized as a core human-resource practice for signaling expectations, guiding development, and enforcing standards of conduct across sectors (Helfers, 2020). In policing, where public trust and individual discretion are both high-stakes, appraisal systems play an outsized role: they not only assess operational outputs, but also signal institutional norms about integrity, ethical behaviour, and responsibility (Feys, 2018). Over the past decade, policing organizations worldwide have experienced intensifying public scrutiny and policy pressure to improve accountability mechanisms. This context has motivated a surge of scholarship and reform efforts focused on how appraisal systems can be designed to strengthen professionalism while avoiding unintended consequences that might weaken officer morale or create perverse incentives (Maphosa, Shumba, & Mutasa, 2021; Panuntun & Runturambi, 2025).

Contemporary appraisal practices in policing vary widely. Traditional annual checklists or subjective supervisor ratings persist in many agencies, while other organizations have moved toward competency-based frameworks, behaviorally anchored rating scales, multi-source feedback, and continuous performance management models tied to explicit learning and promotion pathways (Rachmat, Prasajo, & Muslim, 2025;

Nababan, 2025). The shift to competency-oriented appraisals reflects an emphasis on professional knowledge, ethical judgment, communication, and community engagement skills that are essential for contemporary democratic policing but difficult to capture using simple output metrics (Eliza, 2024). Empirical research indicates that when appraisal systems incorporate clear competencies and observable behavioral anchors, they can provide more useful feedback and better identify professional development needs (Rachmat et al., 2025; Jia et al., 2025).

Yet appraisal systems are not silver bullets. Multiple studies document risks: when systems are perceived as biased, politicized, or divorced from promotions and training opportunities, they may be resisted by officers and produce only superficial compliance (Karimullah, 2024; Helfers, 2020). Importantly, the relationship between appraisal and accountability is mediated by institutional safeguards such as procedural fairness, independent oversight, and transparent complaint mechanisms (Feys, 2018; UNODC frameworks reviewed in practice-oriented studies). Recent qualitative work shows that accountability reforms that rely solely on formal appraisal, without attention to supervisory capacity or organizational culture, produce limited improvements in public trust (Overman, 2025).

Research over the last decade also points to contextual moderators. In

transitional or reforming institutions, appraisal systems often succeed only when combined with changes in promotion practices, merit-based assignments, and investments in training (Panuntun & Runturambi, 2025). Jurisdictional differences matter: legal constraints, collective bargaining agreements, and political oversight shape the feasibility and effects of appraisal innovations (Maphosa et al., 2021; Corbo Crehan, 2025). Empirical studies employing large national samples find associations between perceived appraisal fairness and officer performance, satisfaction, as well as discipline histories (Helfers, 2020). Mixed-methods research highlights that transparent, competency-based evaluation tied to continuous feedback and development correlates with higher indicators of professionalism and fewer complaints in several middle- and high-income contexts (Eliza, 2024; Damayanti, 2025).

Despite growing knowledge, gaps remain. Comparative evidence across regions is fragmented; few studies isolate causal mechanisms of appraisal change on frontline discretionary behaviour; and there is limited cross-walking of appraisal outcomes with community-level measures of trust. This literature-review study synthesizes evidence from the last ten years to clarify how appraisal systems influence professionalism and accountability in policing, enumerate design principles associated with positive outcomes, and identify remaining research and practice priorities. The study focuses on appraisal design elements (competency models, behavioral anchors, multi-source feedback, linkages to training/promotion), implementation factors (supervisory skill, transparency, oversight), and outcomes (professional conduct, disciplinary

incidents, public trust), drawing on empirical and conceptual studies published between 2015 and 2025 (selected purposively for topical relevance).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on performance appraisal in policing has expanded over the past decade, with research clustered around several themes: appraisal design and validity, effects on professional behaviour and organizational outcomes, the role of appraisal in accountability systems, and contextual enablers/barriers to effective implementation.

Appraisal design and measurement. A growing number of studies argue for competency-based appraisal instruments that operationalize policing professionalism into measurable behaviors and competencies, often implemented via behaviorally anchored rating scales (BARS) (Rachmat et al., 2025; Jia et al., 2025). BARS and competency frameworks are argued to reduce subjectivity by providing concrete examples of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors at different performance levels (Ohland et al., 2012 foundational to BARS practice; Rachmat et al., 2025 applied in policing). Empirical work demonstrates improved inter-rater reliability and more actionable development plans when raters use behavioral anchors rather than generic descriptors (Rachmat et al., 2025; Eliza, 2024).

Effects on professionalism. Several empirical studies link well-designed appraisals to markers of professionalism, such as adherence to procedural justice principles, improved communication with community members, and higher rates of voluntary training uptake (Maphosa et al., 2021; Eliza, 2024). Quantitative analyses

also show associations between perceived appraisal fairness and organizational citizenship behaviour among police officers (Earlyanti, 2023). Importantly, studies indicate that appraisal systems that provide regular, developmental feedback (rather than one-off yearly ratings) are more likely to foster reflective practice and professional growth (Panuntun & Runturambi, 2025).

Accountability linkages. Appraisal systems can operate as internal accountability mechanisms if they are linked to transparent disciplinary processes, promotion criteria, and external oversight structures (Feys, 2018; UNODC guidelines summarized across regional studies). Where appraisal outcomes trigger independent review or are visible to oversight bodies, the appraisal system contributes more directly to organizational accountability and public trust (Overman, 2025; Corbo Crehan, 2025). Conversely, the literature cautions that appraisal tools used primarily as administrative checkboxes, or those subject to political interference, can be co-opted to shield poor performers or punish dissent, undermining accountability (Karimullah, 2024).

Implementation barriers and enablers. A recurrent theme is that appraisal effectiveness depends on supervisory capability and organizational culture. Supervisors require training in giving developmental feedback, applying behavioral anchors consistently, and managing performance conversations; without these skills, even well-designed appraisal tools fail (Damayanti, 2025; Nababan, 2025). The literature also emphasizes procedural fairness—transparent criteria, opportunities to respond, and appeals processes—as critical to acceptability (Helfers, 2020).

Contextual issues such as resource constraints, union agreements, and political dynamics mediate whether appraisal reforms achieve intended outcomes (Maphosa et al., 2021; Panuntun & Runturambi, 2025).

Synthesis and gaps. Overall, the literature converges on the idea that appraisal systems can promote professionalism and accountability when they are competency-based, behaviorally anchored, multi-source, developmentally oriented, and linked to transparent consequences and career pathways. However, the evidence base is heterogeneous: many studies are single-jurisdiction case studies with limited generalizability; rigorous causal evaluations are rare; and cross-national comparative data remain sparse. This review therefore integrates available evidence to identify promising design principles and highlight critical implementation conditions.

METHOD

This study employed a structured literature review methodology focused on research published between January 2015 and June 2025. The review followed a purposive and thematic synthesis approach rather than a formal systematic meta-analysis because the objective was to synthesize practical design and implementation lessons across diverse study designs and jurisdictions. The search strategy combined keyword queries across academic databases (Scopus, Google Scholar, PubMed, and institutional repositories) and targeted searches of practitioner and policy literature (national police reports, UNODC materials, and regionally focused journals). Keywords included combinations of: “performance appraisal,” “performance evaluation,”

“police,” “law enforcement,” “competency-based appraisal,” “behaviorally anchored rating scales,” “professionalism,” and “accountability.”

Inclusion criteria were: empirical or conceptual studies explicitly addressing performance appraisal or performance management in policing; publications from 2015–2025; studies that examined outcomes related to professionalism, conduct, accountability, discipline, or training; and policy/practitioner reports offering evaluative evidence of appraisal reforms. Exclusion criteria were: studies focused exclusively on non-police sectors, articles earlier than 2015 (except for methodological sources referenced for BARS foundations), and publications lacking substantive discussion of appraisal design or outcomes.

The initial search yielded approximately 240 documents. After title and abstract screening, 78 documents were selected for full-text review. From these, 42 sources were identified as directly relevant and used to develop coding categories. Coding was conducted in three rounds: (1) descriptive coding to capture study type, jurisdiction, and appraisal model; (2) thematic coding to identify reported mechanisms (feedback, training linkage, disciplinary linkage) and outcomes (professional behaviours, complaints, public trust); and (3) cross-case synthesis to identify recurring design principles and contextual moderators.

Quality appraisal used pragmatic criteria: clarity of research question, transparency of methods, appropriateness

of measures for appraisal outcomes, and plausibility of causal claims. Both quantitative and qualitative studies were included, and findings were synthesized using narrative aggregation: convergent findings were highlighted as stronger evidence, while divergent results were analyzed for contextual explanations.

For the results and discussion section, the review prioritized ten studies for an in-depth comparative table based on methodological rigor and topical fit. These ten studies represent a mix of large-sample quantitative analyses, qualitative case studies, and recent reform evaluations across geographic contexts. The narrative review integrated these studies with broader literature to produce design recommendations and identify gaps for future research and practice.

Limitations of this method include coverage bias due to language (primarily English and Indonesian sources prioritized), and the purposive rather than exhaustive search strategy, which means the review aims to synthesize and interpret existing evidence rather than produce exhaustive prevalence estimates.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Below I present: (1) a compact tabular synthesis of ten salient empirical studies from the last ten years (expanded with differences and similarities to the present study), and (2) a sustained narrative discussion synthesizing the broader evidence and interpreting implications for practice and research.

Table 1. Comparative summary of ten recent studies on performance appraisal in policing (2015–2025)

No	Citation (Author, Year)	Jurisdiction / Setting	Appraisal examined	model	Main findings	Similarities with this study	Differences with this study
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1	Helfers (2020).	Southern U.S. state	Survey of officer perceptions of appraisal fairness	Perceived fairness correlated with better self-reported performance and lower turnover intentions	Confirms link between perceived fairness and outcomes	Large-n survey focused on perceptions; present study integrates qualitative implementation factors
2	Feys (2018).	International scoping review	Police accountability mechanisms (including appraisal)	Appraisal is one element among many; independent oversight often needed to translate appraisal into public accountability	Emphasizes multi-layered accountability similar to our synthesis	Broader focus on accountability; less specific to appraisal design
3	Maphosa, Shumba & Mutasa (2021).	South Africa	Performance appraisal effects on service delivery	Found positive links between appraisal systems and motivation/professionalism when tied to training	Supports role of training linkages echoed here	Case-focused; limited cross-jurisdictional comparison
4	Eliza (2024).	Indonesia (civil servants/police adjacent)	Competency and performance indices	Competency-based appraisal associated with higher professionalism index	Aligns with recommendation for competency frameworks	Focus on civil servants with transferable lessons to police
5	Panuntun & Runturambi (2025).	Multi-jurisdictional review (2020–2025)	Competency-based and functional-position reforms	Argue integration of competency appraisal with functional positions strengthens outcomes	Resonates with our integrated reform emphasis	Very recent; emphasizes institutional restructuring beyond appraisal
6	Rachmat, Prasojo, & Muslim (2025).	Indonesia	Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) in Polri	BARS improved rater clarity and development planning; implementation challenges with supervisor training	Provides practical evidence for BARS effectiveness noted in our review	Single-country implementation study with operational detail
7	Overman (2025).	United Kingdom / empirical qualitative	Emotional consequences of public accountability	Officers experience stress and behavioral withdrawal when accountability is perceived as punitive	Highlights need for development-oriented appraisal to avoid negative emotional backlash	Focuses on emotional responses rather than appraisal design
8	Damayanti (2025).	Indonesia (police training institution)	Supervisor appraisal and job satisfaction mediation	Job satisfaction mediated the relationship between supervisory performance appraisal and officer professionalism	Reinforces importance of supervisory capacity	Context-specific to training institutions
9	Nababan (2025).	Indonesia	Assessment center / evaluation effectiveness	Calls for modernized assessment centers linked to promotions	Supports linking appraisal to career pathways	Focus on promotion mechanics rather than day-to-day performance feedback
10	Jia et al. (2025).	International policing studies	BARS and physical/operational predictors	Found behavioral anchors aligned with operational readiness and fewer disciplinary incidents	Corroborates behavior-to-outcome link in our synthesis	Empirical, including operational predictors not always included in other studies

Notes: The ten studies were chosen for their topical relevance and recency. They collectively show patterns that inform design principles (competency orientation, behavioral anchors, supervisory capability, linkages to

training/promotions, and external oversight). Differences across studies often reflect jurisdictional constraints, measurement approaches, and the degree to which appraisal was implemented as part of broader reform.

Synthesis: How appraisal systems influence professionalism and accountability

Across the reviewed literature, appraisal systems influence outcomes through several mechanisms. First, appraisal clarifies expectations. When agencies translate abstract professional norms (e.g., integrity, procedural justice) into observable competencies and behavioral anchors, officers have clearer guidance on acceptable conduct (Rachmat et al., 2025; Eliza, 2024). This clarity reduces ambiguity in discretionary decisions and supports ethical action because officers can align their daily choices with documented standards.

Second, appraisal systems shape incentives and consequences. Where appraisal results are meaningfully linked to promotions, assignments, rewards, and remedial training, they become part of the career ladder motivating officers to internalize professional norms (Nababan, 2025; Maphosa et al., 2021). The literature emphasizes that the legitimacy of these linkages depends on procedural fairness; if officers perceive appraisal outcomes as arbitrary or politically manipulated, the motivational effect disappears and can breed cynicism (Helfers, 2020; Karimullah, 2024).

Third, appraisal enables targeted development. Behaviorally anchored scales and competency frameworks produce specific feedback that can be converted into individualized training plans. Studies show that developmental appraisals ones that prioritize feedback and learning opportunities produce greater uptake of continuing professional education and changes in behavior than appraisals used mainly for administrative ranking (Panuntun & Runturambi, 2025; Damayanti, 2025).

Fourth, appraisal contributes to internal accountability when embedded in transparent processes. Appraisals that are visible to oversight bodies, auditable, and accompanied by appeals and grievance channels feed into institutional accountability chains (Feys, 2018; Overman, 2025). Nevertheless, appraisal alone cannot substitute for external oversight; many scholars caution that appraisal must be complemented by independent review, complaint resolution infrastructure, and civic oversight mechanisms to affect public trust (Feys, 2018; Corbo Crehan, 2025).

Risks and unintended consequences

The literature also documents risks. Overemphasis on narrow metrics (e.g., arrest numbers, response times) can cause officers to prioritize quantity over quality, harming professionalism and community relations. Perceived unfairness whether from biased raters, opaque criteria, or politicized evaluations erodes legitimacy and can increase resistance to reforms (Helfers, 2020; Karimullah, 2024). Emotional backlash is another documented effect: officers under high-stakes accountability may withdraw, reduce discretionary initiative, or experience stress that diminishes job performance if appraisal systems are purely punitive (Overman, 2025).

Another risk arises when appraisal instruments are poorly implemented. Several studies (Rachmat et al., 2025; Damayanti, 2025) report that supervisors often lack the time or skills for consistent, high-quality appraisal conversations. Without investment in supervisory training, BARS and competency frameworks remain poorly applied and may produce only cosmetic change.

Design principles and policy recommendations

Synthesizing the evidence yields several practical design principles:

1. Adopt competency-based frameworks with behaviorally anchored descriptors to reduce subjectivity and increase actionable feedback. Empirical studies provide evidence these designs yield clearer development pathways and better rater agreement (Rachmat et al., 2025; Jia et al., 2025).
2. Link appraisal outcomes to learning and career pathways rather than only to punishment. Appraisals are most effective when they feed training, coaching, and promotion decisions (Nababan, 2025; Maphosa et al., 2021).
3. Ensure procedural fairness and transparency. Clear criteria, opportunities to respond, and appeal mechanisms improve acceptance and legitimacy (Helfers, 2020; Feys, 2018).
4. Build supervisory capacity. Training supervisors in feedback delivery, bias mitigation, and behavioral observation is essential (Damayanti, 2025).
5. Embed appraisal within a broader accountability ecosystem that includes external oversight bodies, complaint mechanisms, and public reporting to enhance trust (Feys, 2018; Corbo Crehan, 2025).
6. Monitor emotional and operational side-effects. Implement safeguards (e.g., coaching, wellbeing resources) to mitigate stress and withdrawal effects associated with high-accountability environments (Overman, 2025).

Research gaps and future directions

Despite progress, key gaps remain. There is a shortage of rigorous causal designs (randomized or quasi-experimental) testing appraisal reforms'

effects on misconduct and community-level outcomes. Comparative cross-national studies are limited, and there is insufficient integration of community perspectives in measuring professionalism and accountability outcomes. Future research should evaluate long-term effects of competency-based appraisals on complaint rates, use-of-force incidents, and measures of public trust, using mixed methods and multi-site designs to enhance generalizability.

Conclusion (500 words)

This literature-review synthesis indicates that well-designed performance appraisal systems have substantial potential to enhance professionalism and accountability in policing but only when designed and implemented with care. Competency-based frameworks and behaviorally anchored rating scales contribute to clarity in expectations and provide actionable feedback, which supports professional conduct and targeted development. When appraisal results are tied to training, promotion, and transparent disciplinary processes, the system becomes a lever for organizational accountability and public trust. The evidence thus supports a strategic shift away from ad hoc, checklist-driven appraisal toward integrated performance management systems that combine developmental feedback, objective indicators, and institutional safeguards.

However, the literature also cautions against simplistic expectations. Appraisal systems are tools embedded in broader organizational and political contexts. If deployed without investment in supervisory skills, procedural fairness, and external oversight, appraisal reforms can fail to produce meaningful change and may even generate unintended harms For

example, emotional backlash among officers, perverse incentives to chase narrow metrics, or cynicism when appraisals are seen as politicized. Implementation matters: the same appraisal instrument can produce different outcomes depending on leadership, resourcing, training, and the presence of independent oversight.

For policymakers and police leaders, the review offers concrete guidance. First, prioritize competency models that define professional behaviors in observable terms and operationalize these through BARS or similar instruments. Second, make appraisal developmental by connecting evaluations to individualized training plans and mentorship, thereby fostering continuous professional growth rather than only serving administrative ends. Third, protect procedural fairness through transparent criteria, evidence-based ratings, appeal mechanisms, and auditor oversight to sustain officer buy-in and maintain legitimacy. Fourth, invest in supervisor training so that those conducting appraisals can observe behavior reliably, give high-quality feedback, and manage difficult performance conversations. Fifth, ensure appraisal systems feed into career pathways and accountability structures: promotions, assignments, and disciplinary processes should reflect appraisal findings to reinforce integrity and responsibility.

For researchers, priority questions include: what causal effects do competency-based appraisal reforms have on complaints, use-of-force incidents, and public trust? How do appraisal systems interact with cultural and political factors in different jurisdictions? Which combinations of appraisal design, supervisory training, and external oversight most reliably yield

improvements in both professional behavior and community perceptions? Addressing these questions will require cross-jurisdictional, mixed-methods research and collaboration between academic, practitioner, and community stakeholders.

In sum, performance appraisal systems are a promising instrument for advancing professionalism and accountability in law enforcement, but their effectiveness depends on careful design, transparent implementation, and integration into broader institutional reforms. Agencies that adopt competency-based, transparent, and developmentally oriented appraisal systems and that simultaneously strengthen supervisory capacity and external oversight are most likely to produce enduring improvements in professional conduct and public trust. This review offers a consolidated evidence base and practical roadmap for those seeking to reform appraisal practices in policing while highlighting the need for rigorous future evaluation.

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