

Behaviorally anchored rating scales in the performance management system within the centralized policing system in Indonesia

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Abstract: This study investigates the implementation of Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) in the centralized performance management system of the Indonesian National Police (Polri). The research aims to explore how BARS is operationalized and what challenges emerge within the institutional and cultural framework of Polri. A qualitative case study design was employed, utilizing in-depth interviews and document analysis to collect relevant data. Thematic analysis was applied to identify key patterns, challenges, and areas for improvement in BARS application. The findings indicate several barriers to effective implementation, including insufficient training for evaluators, the use of overly generic behavioral indicators, and the dominance of hierarchical relationships that compromise objectivity. These issues contribute to inconsistencies, limited transparency, and reduced strategic value in performance evaluations. The study concludes that without significant reform, the use of BARS will remain largely formalistic and fail to support meaningful performance improvement. Practical implications include the need for enhanced evaluator capacity building, better contextualization of behavioral indicators, and greater integration of performance data into strategic human resource planning. These adjustments are essential for strengthening organizational accountability, professional standards, and public trust in Indonesia's law enforcement institutions.

Keywords: Behaviorally Anchored rating scales (BARS), Centralized policing system, Police performance.

1. Introduction

Performance management is a critical component of human resource management in any organization, including law enforcement institutions. An effective performance management process not only supports individual development but also enhances organizational accountability and professionalism [1]. In the context of policing—where the primary role is to protect, serve, and uphold public order—performance management plays a strategic role. Objective and transparent evaluations ensure that each officer contributes optimally in accordance with their assigned duties and responsibilities.

As an institution operating under a centralized policing system, the Indonesian National Police (Polri) is administratively controlled entirely by the central authority. This system allows for standardization across various organizational dimensions. A centralized policing model can improve policy management efficiency through standardized procedures and interregional coordination Castillo-Manzano, et al. [2]. Van Thielen, et al. [3] found that effective performance management can serve as a tool to strengthen relational coordination within hierarchical environments [3]. However, the rigid hierarchical structure inherent to such a system presents challenges—particularly in ensuring that evaluations are conducted fairly and without bias [4, 5]. In hierarchical organizations like Polri, decisions are often more influenced by rank-based relationships than by concrete evidence of work performance.

These challenges become more evident when considering how hierarchical structures influence decision-making processes. As Mintzberg observed, in hierarchical systems, rank and proximity among

members frequently have a greater impact than objective performance assessments [6]. As a result, decisions are often based on personal relationships rather than measurable performance data, thereby undermining the objectivity and accuracy of evaluations. On the other hand, as noted by Bayley [7] centralized policing facilitates national-level policy coordination and implementation [7]. However, this advantage is often offset by inefficiencies at the local level due to limited flexibility in adapting policies to context-specific needs [8]. The key challenge, therefore, lies in striking a balance between effective centralized control and local adaptability to ensure optimal policy implementation [9].

Beyond organizational structure, cultural factors also play a critical role in the effectiveness of performance evaluations. Polri retains a strong militaristic culture that emphasizes obedience and loyalty to superiors over objective assessment criteria [10, 11]. Highly hierarchical or compliance-oriented cultures tend to amplify evaluation biases [12, 13]. Similar challenges have been documented in other countries with centralized policing systems. For example, in South Korea, performance management in law enforcement often prioritizes loyalty to superiors, resulting in resistance to fair and objective evaluation systems. Perceptions of injustice in performance appraisal not only undermine system effectiveness but also negatively impact overall employee motivation and performance, as demonstrated by Lyu, et al. [14] in their dual-path model linking appraisal justice and job performance [14].

In Turkey, a rigid hierarchical structure promotes confidential evaluation practices, which hinder officer engagement and procedural justice. Research by Gul, et al. [15] found that a lack of transparency in evaluations often leads to dissatisfaction and weakens officer morale [15]. Similarly, in China, a strong emphasis on political and social stability creates a disconnect between crisis management capabilities and everyday performance evaluations. Militaristic culture tends to orient evaluation toward hierarchical control and obscure individual accountability [16].

Drawing from these international cases, it is essential to examine how implicit biases and interpersonal relationships within hierarchical structures influence evaluation processes. In the context of Polri, implicit bias remains a significant challenge, as personal loyalty may distort performance assessments. Burt explains that implicit bias—often unconscious—can further erode objectivity in rigid hierarchical organizations [17]. The militaristic culture, which prioritizes obedience to superiors, complicates the implementation of objective evaluation systems even further. Therefore, a more transparent and equitable approach is necessary to support organizational effectiveness.

One recommended method for addressing these challenges is the Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) approach. Originally developed by Smith and Kendall [18]. BARS emphasizes the retranslation of expectations—a process of redefining observable behavioral standards across performance levels to ensure clear, measurable, and consistent rating anchors [18]. In line with this, Dessler emphasizes that BARS is designed to produce objective and consistent performance evaluations by using concrete and standardized behavioral indicators, thereby reducing ambiguity and ensuring that ratings reflect actual workplace behaviors [19]. The effectiveness of BARS also depends on an organization's ability to provide adequate evaluator training and to establish well-defined behavioral indicators [20]. This approach aims to reduce evaluation bias and enhance objectivity in performance assessments. The following section compares BARS with general performance evaluation methods used in policing organizations [21].

Table 1.
Comparison Between BARS and General Police Performance Evaluation Methods.

Aspect	Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS)	General Rating Scales
Assessment Method	Uses a rating scale linked to specific performance levels.	Generally uses a numerical or categorical scale without specific behavioral indicators.
Objectivity	More objective because it is based on observable specific behaviors.	Prone to subjective bias, depending on the evaluator's interpretation.
Police Involvement in Evaluation	Officers actively participate in the evaluation process and can provide feedback on their assessments.	Typically top-down, where police officers only receive evaluation results without opportunities for clarification or feedback.
Evaluation Criteria	Based on specific behavioral analysis related to police work.	Based on numerical or administrative aspects such as the number of completed cases, without considering behavioral aspects.
Interrater Agreement (Evaluator Consistency)	More consistent across different evaluators due to clearly defined behavioral indicators.	Tends to vary among evaluators due to the lack of clear standards.
Ability to Differentiate Performance	Allows more accurate differentiation between officers based on concrete behaviors.	Tends to make it difficult to distinguish between high and low-performing officers due to the use of general standards.
Validity and Accuracy	Higher in measuring actual performance as it focuses on specific actions.	Prone to leniency effect (overly lenient assessments) or halo effect (assessments influenced by a dominant factor).
Implementation Challenges	Requires more resources to develop appropriate scales and train evaluators.	Easier to implement as it only requires numerical scores without in-depth analysis.

Academically, this study addresses a gap in the literature concerning the implementation of the BARS method in hierarchical, centralized, and militaristic organizations. Most existing research on BARS focuses on private-sector organizations or public institutions with decentralized structures [22–25]. This study makes a significant academic contribution by exploring the application of BARS in a centralized police organization with a militaristic culture, thereby enriching the discourse on performance evaluation in public sector institutions.

Practically, this research offers evidence-based recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of the Performance Management System, particularly within Polri. The findings can inform the development of a performance evaluation approach that is more adaptive to Polri's organizational needs and may also be relevant for police institutions in other countries with similar characteristics. Polri implements BARS within its performance management framework through the assessment of Work Behavior (*Perilaku Kerja Anggota/PKA*), which is part of the Generic Factors component in the SMK, as stipulated in Indonesian National Police Regulation No. 2 of 2018 [26]. This study is also timely within the broader context of Polri's ongoing reform initiatives, in which transparency and accountability in performance appraisal play a key role in building public trust in the police [27].

This study posits that the BARS method cannot be effectively implemented within a centralized policing organization such as Polri. The structural and cultural characteristics of Polri—including its rigid hierarchy and entrenched militaristic traditions—are presumed to contradict the foundational principles of BARS, which emphasize flexibility, autonomy, and objectivity in evaluations. This research seeks to explore the extent to which these organizational challenges hinder the implementation of BARS and to identify solutions for improving accountability and professionalism through a performance evaluation approach that is better suited to Polri's context. The findings are expected to contribute to strengthening Polri's Performance Management System as part of broader efforts to establish a professional, modern, and trustworthy police force.

2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative method with a case study approach to explore the implementation of Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) in the assessment of Work Behavior (*Perilaku Kerja*

Anggota / PKA) within the Performance Management System (SMK) of the Indonesian National Police (Polri). The qualitative approach enables an in-depth exploration of the experiences, challenges, and perceptions of key stakeholders within Polri, particularly policymakers at the National Police Headquarters who are responsible for evaluating personnel performance. The case study approach was chosen because this research focuses on a specific phenomenon within Polri, an organization characterized by a highly centralized policing system and a strong militaristic culture.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews to understand how BARS is implemented and what challenges are encountered, as well as through the analysis of policy documents—including Indonesian National Police Regulation No. 2 of 2018 and internal Polri reports related to performance evaluations. The primary internal document used in this study is the 2021 Analysis and Evaluation Report on the Performance Management System (SMK) of Polri [28]. This report is considered relevant, as no amendments have been made to Regulation No. 2 of 2018 regarding Polri's performance assessment system at the time of writing. In addition to internal sources, relevant external materials related to the research problem were also utilized. This study did not require formal ethical approval, as it did not involve sensitive personal data or interventions with human subjects. All participants were informed of the research purpose and voluntarily consented to participate in the interviews.

The collected data were analyzed using a thematic approach, which involved identifying, analyzing, and reporting key patterns or themes that emerged from the interviews and document analysis. To enhance the validity of the research findings, data triangulation was employed by integrating insights from multiple sources. This method provides a comprehensive and contextual understanding of the phenomenon under study and offers relevant recommendations to support improvements in Polri's Performance Management System (SMK).

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. The Policing System in Indonesia

The Indonesian National Police (Polri) is the institution responsible for law enforcement, maintaining public order, and delivering public services throughout Indonesia. This role is defined under Article 13 of Law No. 2 of 2002 of the Republic of Indonesia, which stipulates that the primary duties of Polri include: (a) maintaining public security and order; (b) enforcing the law; and (c) providing protection, guidance, and services to the community [29]. As a centralized institution, Polri operates directly under the authority of the President, with administrative control concentrated at the national level. This is reinforced by Article 8, paragraph (1) of the same law, which states that Polri is directly accountable to the President as the highest authority. This legal framework establishes a clear foundation for Polri's centralized structure and governance. Such a system facilitates standardization in various operational and policy domains, including law enforcement procedures, personnel training, and performance evaluation.

In contrast, the policing system in the United States is highly decentralized. Each state, city, and even small communities have their own independent law enforcement agencies with limited jurisdiction. This structure allows for considerable flexibility in addressing local needs but often presents challenges in achieving national coordination [30, 31]. For instance, the variation in law enforcement policies across states can result in inconsistencies in the overall application of justice. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom implements a decentralized system with centralized coordination, where regional police forces have operational autonomy while remaining accountable to local Police and Crime Commissioners, as well as to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services to ensure adherence to national standards [32]. This system allows policy adaptation to local conditions while maintaining consistency in addressing national security threats, such as terrorism, which still follow centralized guidelines.

In Indonesia, the centralized policing system enables all strategic policies and decisions to be coordinated directly from the national level. This arrangement promotes strong national synergy; however, challenges persist in addressing region-specific needs effectively. One of the main advantages

of Polri's centralized structure is its capacity for efficient national coordination, standardized service delivery, and centralized resource management. For example, in responding to national disasters such as earthquakes or floods, Polri can swiftly deploy personnel from various regions due to its centrally managed operations. Police responsiveness in emergencies is heavily influenced by the degree of coordination within the system [33]. Furthermore, a coordinated response to security threats such as terrorism becomes feasible through the consolidation of intelligence at the national level [34]. Standardized law enforcement procedures ensure equitable services for all Indonesian citizens, including in criminal investigations [35]. Centralized command also allows Polri to execute large-scale operations—such as securing elections or international events—that require interregional coordination. Additionally, the allocation of strategic resources, including tactical equipment and budgeting, can be adjusted rapidly to align with national priorities.

Nevertheless, the centralized system also presents several challenges, particularly in the effective implementation of national policies at the local level. Uniform policies may not always be compatible with the unique needs of specific regions, especially those with distinct social and cultural contexts. For instance, remote areas may face difficulties implementing central policies due to limited infrastructure. Prolonged decision-making processes can further hinder timely responses to urgent situations, such as handling communal conflicts, which demand swift, context-sensitive action [32, 33]. Moreover, the hierarchical organizational structure often impedes bottom-up communication and innovation, making it difficult for lower-level personnel to convey insights and recommendations to national-level decision-makers.

The organizational culture within Polri—shaped by strong militaristic traditions—also influences the effectiveness of policy implementation. In such a culture, loyalty and obedience to superiors are prioritized above all else. This can pose challenges in the implementation of evaluation systems that require high levels of transparency and accountability, such as the Performance Management System (SMK). A militaristic police culture tends to prioritize hierarchical obedience and constrain individual moral reflection [36]. These observations are supported by Walker and Katz, who argue that hierarchical organizational structures often hinder evidence-based decision-making [30]. In highly structured systems, personal relationships between superiors and subordinates frequently carry more weight in decision-making than empirical evidence.

3.2. Stages of Performance Assessment Using SMK

The performance assessment procedure within Polri, as regulated by Indonesian National Police Regulation No. 2 of 2018, serves as the primary framework for implementing the Performance Management System (SMK). This procedure is designed to ensure that the evaluation of Polri personnel is conducted based on the principles of fairness, transparency, and accountability. It not only measures work outcomes quantitatively but also assesses work behavior that reflects the organization's core values. The process consists of several key stages: performance planning, performance monitoring, performance assessment implementation, and performance evaluation, as illustrated below:

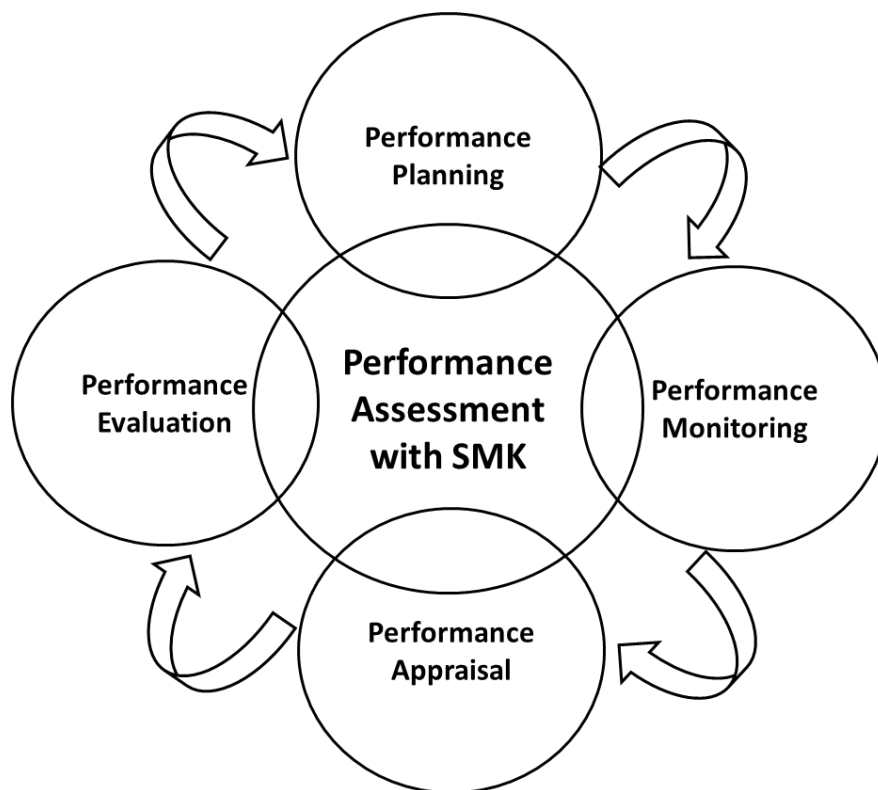


Figure 1.
Stages of Performance Assessment for Polri Personnel Using the SMK System.

In the performance planning stage, Polri personnel prepare a work contract that defines their duties, job indicators, and targets for one semester, which must be approved by the Evaluating Officer (*Pejabat Penilai/PP*). Performance monitoring is conducted periodically by the Evaluating Officer and Peers (*Rekan Kerja/RK*) to ensure target achievement and provide feedback for performance improvement. The performance assessment includes specific factors, such as work contracts and additional tasks, as well as generic factors, including the Work Behavior Assessment (*Perilaku Kerja Anggota/PKA*), rewards, and sanctions. The assessment results are summarized in a recap form and used in the final evaluation to measure target achievement and provide recommendations for skill development, particularly for personnel with low scores. Personnel demonstrating excellent performance may receive rewards and career development opportunities. Consistency in this system encourages innovation that contributes positively to the organization.

3.3. Elements of Performance Assessment Using SMK

The elements of performance assessment in the Indonesian National Police Performance Management System consist of specific factors and generic factors. Specific factors reflect individual responsibilities through work contracts and additional tasks, while generic factors describe work behavior that aligns with the organization's values. These two factors are designed to provide a comprehensive evaluation of Polri personnel performance. Specific factors include work contracts and additional tasks, each serving as a specific measurement tool to identify an individual's contribution to the organization. The work contract outlines job descriptions, job indicators, and targets that must be achieved within a given period, while additional tasks provide extra value based on special roles undertaken by personnel beyond their primary work contract.

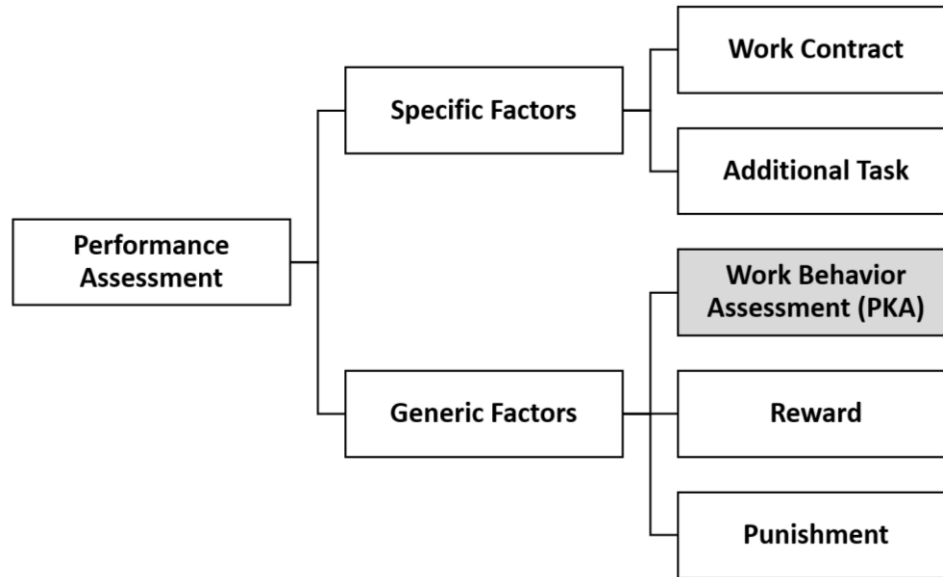


Figure 2.
Elements of Performance Assessment for Polri Personnel Using the SMK System.

Generic factors assess Work Behavior Assessment (*Perilaku Kerja Anggota / PKA*), which includes aspects such as leadership, integrity, empathy, and teamwork. Additionally, rewards and sanctions are also part of the generic factors, providing recognition for specific achievements or penalties for violations. In PKA assessment, the Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) method serves as a framework that links performance indicators with observable specific behaviors. This approach makes the evaluation of aspects such as integrity and empathy more measurable and standardized. The assessment is conducted by the Evaluating Officer (*Pejabat Penilai / PP*) and Peers (*Rekan Kerja / RK*) to ensure that the evaluation results accurately reflect the member's actual contributions to the organization.

The assessment of both specific and generic factors is integrated into the evaluation form to produce the final performance score. This process applies different weightings for each factor, with specific factors accounting for 60 percent and generic factors 40 percent. This approach aims to provide a balanced evaluation between quantitative achievements and work behavior. With these elements in place, Polri ensures that performance assessments are not solely based on results but also reflect the organizational values that it seeks to instill in each of its members.

3.4. Challenges in Implementing BARS in the Work Behavior Assessment of Generic Factors in Polri's Performance Management System

The Work Behavior Assessment (*Perilaku Kerja Anggota / PKA*) within the Generic Factors of Polri's Performance Management System (SMK) represents the practical application of the Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) method. This method utilizes behavioral indicators such as leadership, service orientation, communication, emotional control, integrity, empathy, commitment to the organization, initiative, discipline, and teamwork as anchors to objectively measure personnel performance. The following are some key differences between BARS and PKA in the Generic Factors of Polri's Performance Management System [37]:

Table 2.
Comparison Between BARS and Work Behavior Assessment (PKA) in Polri's Performance Management System (SMK).

Aspect	Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) in SMK Polri	General Work Behavior Assessment in Polri
Definition	Performance assessment method based on a scale with specific observable behavioral examples at each performance level.	Every behavior, attitude, or action of Polri members in carrying out their duties or complying with applicable regulations.
Assessment Approach	Based on concrete behavioral descriptors that link performance with actual actions.	Based on compliance with regulations and organizational norms, as well as how members act in their daily roles as police officers.
Objectivity	More objective because it is based on specific behaviors rather than numbers or subjective interpretation by evaluators.	Still relies on direct superiors' interpretation, which can lead to bias in assessments.
Interrater Agreement (Evaluator Consistency)	Higher agreement because clear behavioral descriptors reduce subjective bias among evaluators.	Tends to vary among evaluators because assessments are based on general observations rather than specific behavioral scales.
Transparency	High transparency because the rating scale is based on concrete behaviors that can be tested and verified.	Theoretically transparent, but there is still potential for subjective interpretation by direct superiors when assigning scores.
Assessment Components	Uses task-based indicators such as decision-making, communication, conflict resolution, and rule compliance.	Focuses on attitude, ethics, discipline, and adherence to Polri's internal rules.
Police Officer Involvement in Evaluation	Officers can provide feedback on their assessment results, creating a fairer environment.	Officers being evaluated only have the right to file an objection if they feel the assessment is unfair.
Application in Law Enforcement Organizations	More commonly used in decentralized policing systems and community policing models.	Exclusively applied in Polri as a centralized system, with a focus on compliance and conduct as state officials.
Validity and Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High validity as it is based on observable behaviors, reducing evaluator interpretation bias. - Accurate in distinguishing officer performance since each scale includes real behavioral examples. - Improves assessment reliability because each performance level is supported by concrete behavioral indicators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lower validity compared to BARS because it depends on the supervisor's perception and lacks clear behavioral indicators. - Less accurate in distinguishing officer performance because behavioral aspects are not always linked to concrete performance but rather to rule compliance. - Can be influenced by non-performance factors such as personal relationships between officers and evaluators.
Implementation Challenges	Requires more resources to develop behavioral scales and train evaluators.	Easier to implement as it only relies on supervisor assessments.

In accordance with Police Regulation No. 2 of 2018, each PKA indicator is accompanied by a specific behavioral description that reflects performance levels ranging from low to high. This approach establishes a standardized, behavior-based evaluation system that is observable, thereby aiming to reduce subjectivity in performance assessments. The following is a description of work behavior for one of the performance factors—service orientation—used in the PKA assessment, as outlined in Police Regulation No. 2 of 2018:

Table 3.

Example of PKA Assessment in Polri's SMK System (Performance Factor: Service Orientation) in Indonesian National Police Regulation No. 2 of 2018.

Performance Factor	Performance Standard	Score Range
Service Orientation	Always completes service tasks well, with a polite attitude, and provides excellent satisfaction for both internal and external services.	91-100
	Generally completes service tasks well, with a polite attitude, and provides satisfactory service for both internal and external organizations.	76-90
	Occasionally completes service tasks adequately, with a reasonably polite attitude, and provides moderate satisfaction for both internal and external organizations.	61-75
	Struggles to complete service tasks well, has a less polite attitude, and provides unsatisfactory service for both internal and external organizations.	51-60
	Never completes service tasks well, has an impolite attitude, and provides completely unsatisfactory service for both internal and external organizations.	Below 51

The implementation of Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) in the Work Behavior Assessment (*Perilaku Kerja Anggota / PKA*) under the Generic Factors of Polri's Performance Management System (SMK) faces several significant challenges related to organizational structure, work culture, and application mechanisms. One of the primary obstacles is the rigid hierarchy, which often leads to performance evaluations being influenced by personal relationships between superiors and subordinates. In a highly centralized system, evaluation decisions frequently reflect loyalty to superiors rather than objective assessments of personnel behavior based on BARS indicators.

Bias in evaluation frequently arises due to a lack of transparency and consistent standards, which negatively impacts perceptions of fairness among organizational members [38]. Perceptions of unfairness in the appraisal system not only weaken its effectiveness but also reduce individual motivation and performance [39]. In Polri's context, bias stemming from personal relationships between superiors and subordinates can create perceptions of unfairness, ultimately undermining the effectiveness of performance evaluations. Jeon & Jeong further emphasize that perceptions of fairness in evaluations play a crucial role in reducing negative attitudes—such as resistance or reluctance to accept evaluation results—which can hinder professional development [40].

The gap between the principles of objectivity in BARS and its actual implementation in the field is reflected in the findings of the Analysis and Evaluation Report on Polri's Performance Management System (SMK). The report raises concerns regarding the accountability of the performance assessment process for Polri personnel. It reveals that performance scores often appear unrealistic, with some ratings falling below 60 or even zero, suggesting that evaluations are conducted without adequate supporting evidence. Conversely, high scores—such as 90 or even 100—are also frequently assigned without being grounded in measurable behavioral indicators. The following data presents problematic SMK scores of Polri personnel, as documented in the 2021 Analysis and Evaluation Report on Polri's Performance Management System by the Human Resources Staff of Polri:

Table 4.
Problematic SMK Scores of Polri Personnel.

No	Work Unit	Score < 60	Score 60-100	Score > 100
1	Indonesian National Police (HQ)	59	97	3
2	Inspectorate of General Supervision	16	27	-
3	Operations Staff	79	21	-
4	Planning Staff	13	14	-
5	Human Resources Staff	7	107	3
6	Division of Profession and Internal Security	8	31	-
7	Legal Division	4	12	-
8	Public Relations Division	10	16	-
9	International Relations Division	15	45	1
10	Information Technology and Communications Division	2	96	-
11	Expert Staff	90	2	-
12	Personal Secretariat for Leadership	6	10	1
13	General Secretariat	106	4	-
14	Headquarters Services	124	164	-
15	Intelligence and Security Agency	89	93	3
16	Security Maintenance Agency	110	289	1
17	Criminal Investigation Agency	78	276	1
18	Traffic Corps	55	49	1
19	Brimob Corps	61	1084	3
20	Special Detachment 88 Anti-Terror	193	175	4
21	Education and Training Institute	70	569	5
22	Research and Development Center	104	5	-
23	Financial Center	204	10	-
24	Medical and Health Center	92	49	1
25	History Center	-	3	-
26	Logistics Staff	54	74	2
27	Aceh Regional Police	13	989	39
28	North Sumatra Regional Police	118	3516	82
29	West Sumatra Regional Police	74	1219	29
30	Riau Regional Police	35	1791	30
31	Riau Islands Regional Police	42	393	6
32	South Sumatra Regional Police	73	2460	61
33	Bengkulu Regional Police	48	716	51
34	Jambi Regional Police	44	1151	34
35	Lampung Regional Police	395	1410	76
36	Jakarta Metropolitan Regional Police	62	3745	58
37	West Java Regional Police	171	4596	103
38	Banten Regional Police	202	933	40
39	Central Java Regional Police	109	4158	270
40	Yogyakarta Special Region Police	104	1197	28
41	East Java Regional Police	47	3919	62
42	West Kalimantan Regional Police	279	1127	53
43	South Kalimantan Regional Police	122	1001	48
44	Central Kalimantan Regional Police	6	1077	21
45	East Kalimantan Regional Police	109	718	27
46	Bali Regional Police	107	1049	36
47	West Nusa Tenggara Regional Police	172	881	35
48	East Nusa Tenggara Regional Police	168	1598	34
49	South Sulawesi Regional Police	9	2212	65
50	Central Sulawesi Regional Police	14	1503	78
51	North Sulawesi Regional Police	2	766	11
52	Maluku Regional Police	1	1593	35
53	Papua Regional Police	1	2371	33
54	North Maluku Regional Police	2	1602	-
55	West Sulawesi Regional Police	10	768	12

No	Work Unit	Score < 60	Score 60-100	Score > 100
56	Gorontalo Regional Police	4	841	24
57	North Kalimantan Regional Police	1	301	4
58	West Papua Regional Police	1	814	20
59	Bangka Belitung Islands Regional Police	32	630	16
60	Southeast Sulawesi Regional Police	13	638	16
	Total	4.239	57.005	1.566

The data in Table 4 above indicates that several work units recorded performance scores significantly below the target. For example, the Education and Training Institute (*Lemdiklat*) reported 569 personnel with scores below 60, while the Mobile Brigade Corps (*Korbrimob*) recorded 1,084 personnel with similarly low scores. This suggests that many evaluations were conducted without sufficient supporting evidence or even without direct supervision from the Evaluating Officer (*Pejabat Penilai / PP*). Conversely, exceptionally high scores recorded by some units—exceeding 100—also point to inconsistencies in applying measurable behavioral indicators. These discrepancies further reinforce the argument that a rigid hierarchy and a culture of loyalty exert greater influence on performance evaluations than the principles of objectivity that should guide PKA assessments using the BARS method.

The inconsistencies in the data, such as scores below 60 recorded in several work units, can be attributed to the SMK assessment process being conducted without adequate oversight. The Analysis and Evaluation Report on Polri's Performance Management System noted that the assessment process is often carried out by administrative staff without direct involvement from the Evaluating Officer. This situation results in outcomes that do not accurately reflect actual personnel performance. Scores below 60 suggest that personnel failed to meet their performance targets, despite the existence of corrective measures outlined in Police Regulation No. 2 of 2018. These measures include periodic evaluations conducted each semester to assess progress in achieving performance objectives.

Issues arising in the implementation of SMK—particularly in the Work Behavior Assessment (PKA)—highlight the critical role of the Evaluating Officer (PP) and Peers (RK) as assessors. However, ideal implementation is often not achieved due to overlapping responsibilities and a lack of training in behavior-based evaluation methods. This problem is further compounded by the fact that SMK assessments are frequently conducted by administrative personnel without proper oversight from PP. Such conditions reduce the credibility of assessment results and create a gap between actual performance and recorded outcomes. This condition stands in contrast to the spirit of performance management systems that emphasize procedural justice and transparency in evaluation as key to enhancing organizational effectiveness and employee well-being [32, 41].

One of the primary recommendations for implementing BARS effectively is the need for intensive training for evaluators to understand the method's core principles [18, 20]. This training ensures that evaluators can apply behavioral indicators objectively and consistently, based on predefined anchors. However, field findings indicate that Polri has never provided such training to Evaluating Officers (PP) and Peers (RK), who are directly responsible for conducting performance assessments—especially in evaluating Work Behavior (PKA). Instead, the training has been directed toward operators or administrative staff responsible for managing the Performance Evaluation Information System (*Sistem Informasi Penilaian Kinerja*, SIPK), the digital platform used to implement SMK. Lubbe & Nitsche emphasize that adequate training in developing and applying behavioral indicators is essential to minimizing subjectivity and bias in performance evaluations [42]. Without this training, PP and RK often lack the competence to accurately interpret behavioral indicators, making the assessments more vulnerable to personal bias and interpersonal influence.

The inconsistencies in BARS implementation become even more evident when correlated with data on violations committed by Polri personnel, which have shown a significant upward trend over the past five years, as presented in the following table, based on records from the Planning and Administration Bureau, Division of Profession and Security (Bagrenmin Divpropam) of the Indonesian National Police

Table 5.
Disciplinary Violations Committed by Polri Personnel (2019–2023).

No.	Type of Violation	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
1	Disciplinary Violations	2503	3304	3534	3124	3631	16096
2	Code of Ethics Violations	1021	2081	1642	1936	2547	9227
	Total	3524	5385	5176	5060	6178	25323

The data in Table 5 above shows that in 2019, there were 3,524 recorded violations, which increased to 6,178 cases in 2023. These violations include various disciplinary offenses and breaches of the Polri Professional Code of Ethics, reflecting fundamental weaknesses in the supervision and evaluation systems of personnel behavior. Although Polri has adopted SMK, which incorporates BARS to objectively measure and evaluate PKA, its field implementation has not effectively prevented or detected potential violations. The behavioral evaluation data collected through SMK has not been fully utilized to identify risky behavior patterns that are crucial for the early prevention of disciplinary and ethical breaches. However, in-depth analysis of evaluation results is often overlooked, allowing the trend of increasing violations to persist without significant corrective action.

Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS), as developed by Smith and Kendall, aim to create objective performance evaluations through the use of specific, observable behavioral anchors to enhance both objectivity and consistency in appraisal systems [43]. This system helps organizations identify risky behaviors and provides clear guidance for evaluating employee conduct [37]. In Polri's context, implementing BARS in PKA should enable early detection of negative behavior so that corrective actions can be taken before violations escalate. However, the rising number of violations suggests a significant gap between the ideal objectives of BARS and its actual implementation in the field.

This situation suggests that the implementation of PKA through the BARS method has not functioned effectively. Rather than ensuring objective and behavior-based evaluations, the system has failed to detect problematic behaviors that could escalate into serious violations. This undermines the credibility of assessment results and creates a disconnect between the intended goals of SMK and its execution in practice. Moreover, this failure has broader consequences, particularly a decline in public trust toward Polri. Public trust is not only shaped by technical performance but also by the perceived integrity of police personnel. When violations continue to rise, it becomes difficult for the public to believe that Polri has successfully implemented internal reforms.

One of the main obstacles underlying these issues is the inaccuracy of the behavioral evaluation process. Evaluating Officers (PP) and Peers (RK), who are responsible for performance assessments, often lack a proper understanding of the behavioral indicators used as the basis for evaluation. Performance appraisals conducted by direct supervisors or peers in the public sector are prone to subjective bias, reducing their reliability in objectively identifying work-related behavior [44]. Fairness in behavioral evaluations depends heavily on trust in the evaluators and their competence in interpreting behavioral indicators [40]. Such inaccuracies render the evaluation process ineffective in providing an accurate picture of behavioral risks that may develop into violations.

The implementation of the Performance Management System (SMK) through the Performance Evaluation Information System (SIPK) often focuses more on administrative compliance than on serving as a strategic tool for individual performance development or violation prevention. As a result, performance assessments are treated as formalities rather than effective mechanisms for detecting and addressing behavioral issues. Previous studies have shown that performance management systems not designed to support strategic analysis tend to lose their value as tools for supervision and professional growth [45, 46]. Consequently, performance evaluation data that should guide decisions regarding training and career development is often used merely to fulfill administrative requirements. This condition not only undermines the effectiveness of the SMK system but also increases the likelihood of undetected violations and missed opportunities for early intervention.

The inconsistencies in Work Behavior Assessment (PKA) results point to deeper problems in the design and implementation of behavioral indicators. BARS are intended to use specific, observable, and

job-relevant behavioral indicators [18]. Behavioral indicators that are too generic or fail to align with the specific operational demands of police units—such as those requiring rapid decision-making—can hinder accurate assessment and reduce the contextual validity of performance evaluations [47]. In such cases, non-specific indicators fail to capture the complexity of fieldwork, reducing the objectivity of evaluations and making the results unrepresentative of actual performance. Klieger, et al. [48] emphasize the importance of validating behavioral indicators with expert input to ensure that they are relevant to specific job tasks and are observable in practice [48]. Appropriate indicators are essential not only for ensuring accurate assessments but also for supporting effective decision-making [49].

Additionally, Kingstrom and Bass [21] highlight that poorly designed behavioral indicators can compromise evaluation accuracy and reduce the strategic value of BARS as an effective assessment tool, particularly in complex and varied job contexts Kingstrom and Bass [21]. Martin-Raugh, et al. [50] argue that a well-designed BARS framework not only improves objectivity in evaluations but also contributes significantly to individual professional development [50]. The large discrepancies in performance scores across work units suggest that PKA assessments often fail to consider the specific operational contexts of each unit. Units with high-risk functions—such as the Mobile Brigade Corps (Brimob) or the Criminal Investigation Unit (Reskrim)—require a different approach to behavioral evaluation compared to administrative units. According to Shah et al., perceptions of irrelevant or overly complex appraisal indicators can diminish employee motivation to improve performance and undermine appraisal system effectiveness, particularly when leader–member exchange (LMX) quality is low Shah, et al. [39].

Kell, et al. [37] stress that the success of BARS implementation depends on the development of behavioral indicators that are specific, relevant, and observable, and that reflect the job context [37]. This aligns with Yin et al. who found that non-contextualized indicators reduce evaluation accuracy—especially in organizations with diverse operational functions like Polri [51]. For example, behavioral indicators developed for administrative roles cannot effectively measure performance in tactical units such as the Mobile Brigade Corps, where rapid decision-making is essential. Standardized indicators lose relevance when applied across all job types, decreasing assessment accuracy and undermining trust in evaluation results. Behavioral indicators that are not designed with contextual relevance can limit the effectiveness of the assessment as a performance development tool [37, 50].

Performance development within the SMK system should logically follow from the performance evaluation process, which is one of the stages outlined in Polri's SMK framework, as illustrated in Figure 1. However, in practice, Polri's performance evaluation process often becomes a mere administrative routine without clear follow-up to address performance gaps. This is reflected in Police Regulation No. 2 of 2018, particularly in Article 25, which states that personnel with poor evaluations are recommended to participate in capacity-building programs, yet without a clear implementation mechanism. Furthermore, these programs are not supported by a dedicated budget, making consistent execution difficult. This condition highlights a gap between policy and implementation. Additionally, the evaluation process does not clearly differentiate between generic and specific factors, despite the fact that each requires distinct follow-up strategies. Generic factors such as PKA are related to behavioral or attitudinal development, while specific factors focus more on enhancing technical knowledge and skills. This lack of differentiation further weakens the role of evaluation as a strategic tool for supporting personnel competency development.

The integration of evaluation results with organizational strategy, as emphasized by Kang & Choi, is a critical pillar of effective performance-based management, ensuring that decision-making is informed by relevant data and inclusive of employee input—thereby supporting both individual growth and organizational success Kang and Choi [52]. Micacchi, et al. [53] also argue that the perceived fairness of performance appraisal systems significantly influences public employees' engagement and their commitment to institutional goals, underscoring the importance of well-designed appraisal mechanisms in public sector organizations [53]. Van Thielen et al. emphasize that utilizing performance evaluation data through appropriate design and processes significantly impacts inter-unit

coordination and operational efficiency in police organizations Van Thielen, et al. [3]. Bracewell [54] highlight the role of data professionals in police organizations as crucial intermediaries between performance assessment practices and public value management, emphasizing their capacity to address ethical issues, policy dilemmas, and service values [55]. However, the centralized nature of Indonesia's policing system limits bottom-up innovation, as all policies must be authorized at the national level. This rigidity not only delays the implementation of development programs but also reduces the system's flexibility to respond to local-specific needs. The Police Foundation notes that limited flexibility in performance management systems can result in suboptimal outcomes, especially when local challenges are not accommodated by centralized policies [56]. This increases the risk of performance stagnation and hampers efforts to enhance the competencies of police personnel.

4. Conclusion

The implementation of Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) within a centralized policing system, as applied by the Indonesian National Police (Polri) through its Performance Management System (SMK), faces significant challenges rooted in structural characteristics and organizational culture. As a hierarchical and militaristic organization, Polri adopted the BARS method to assess Work Behavior (*Perilaku Kerja Anggota* / PKA) with the aim of establishing an objective and behavior-based evaluation framework. However, its implementation has shown inconsistencies with the fundamental principles of BARS, particularly in terms of objectivity, flexibility, and contextual adaptation.

This case study reveals that the centralized system tends to reinforce subjective biases in performance evaluations, wherein personal relationships between superiors and subordinates often have a greater influence on assessment outcomes than observable behavioral evidence. Moreover, the implementation of SMK within Polri has been predominantly focused on administrative compliance, without fully leveraging the strategic potential of BARS for individual performance development. The evaluation data show unrealistic scores—both excessively low and high—reflecting inadequate supervision and a lack of training for Evaluating Officers (PP) and Peers (RK). The effectiveness of BARS is further constrained by the use of standardized behavioral indicators that do not always align with the specific duties of various Polri units. This lack of contextual relevance reduces assessment accuracy, particularly for units engaged in complex operational tasks. Additionally, Polri's militaristic culture exacerbates these challenges, as it emphasizes loyalty and obedience over transparency and accountability.

Overall, the implementation of BARS in Polri's centralized system requires comprehensive reform, including capacity-building for evaluators, contextual adjustment of behavioral indicators, and enhancement of transparency in the evaluation process. These improvements must be supported by the utilization of evaluation results to detect early behavioral risks, thereby preventing violations and improving the quality of public service. Furthermore, strategic measures are needed to integrate performance evaluation outcomes with sustainable development programs, such as targeted training aligned with specific needs. Therefore, Polri's SMK should not merely function as an administrative instrument but must evolve into a strategic mechanism that supports institutional reform and contributes to building a professional, accountable, and trustworthy police force.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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