

FACTORS CAUSING AND ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENTS AGED 12–15 WHO JOIN THE 'W13K' GANG IN TEGAL CITY

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the problems, causal factors, and alternative solutions for adolescents aged 12–15 years who joined the W13K gangster group in Tegal City. This topic is important because adolescent involvement in gangster groups has become a social issue that contributes to delinquent behavior, violence, and disruption of public order. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation involving four adolescent members of W13K, four parents, and one community leader selected purposively. Data were analyzed using the stages of data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing, while data validity was ensured through source triangulation. The findings indicate that the adolescents were involved in various forms of juvenile delinquency, including physical violence, property damage, social misconduct, and school-related disciplinary violations. The main factors contributing to their involvement were unstable emotional control, peer pressure, lack of parental supervision, negative social environments, and the desire to gain recognition within the group. Alternative solutions include strengthening family supervision, character education in schools, counseling services, positive youth activities, and collaboration among parents, schools, communities, and law enforcement agencies. These findings emphasize the importance of integrated preventive efforts to reduce juvenile delinquency and support positive adolescent development.

Keywords: juvenile delinquency; gangster; adolescents; W13K; qualitative research;

1 INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a life-changing period. The transition from childhood to adulthood generally occurs between the ages of 12 and 21 and is often referred to as the stage of identity formation. During this period, adolescents develop cognitive, social, physical, and emotional skills. These developmental changes encourage them to seek ways to express themselves, which may sometimes be manifested through inappropriate behaviors such as juvenile delinquency.

Juvenile delinquency refers to behaviors that violate social norms and values (Sumiati, 2009). It reflects adolescents' noncompliance with the rules established by their families, schools, communities, and personal moral standards. Adolescents are expected to learn and adhere to these norms (Nikmah Rahmawati, 2016). According to Dadan Sumara et al. (2017), juvenile delinquency includes any behavior committed by adolescents that violates criminal law. Winda Oktawati (2017) argues that juvenile delinquency is rooted in the lack of parental and community attention to children's development, as well as the absence of religious and moral values within their environment.

One form of juvenile delinquency that has become a growing concern is the emergence of adolescent gangster groups. These groups are not merely social gatherings of teenagers but are frequently associated with violent activities such as gang fights, vandalism, intimidation, illegal street racing, and the use of sharp weapons, all of which threaten public safety. According to Unayah and Sabarisman (2015), adolescence is often characterized as a period of rebellion. During puberty, adolescents tend to experience heightened emotions and various personal and social conflicts. As a result of these psychological changes, they often reject anything they perceive as restricting their freedom and engage in behaviors they consider "rebellious" or "delinquent."

Adolescents' involvement in gangster groups is influenced by various internal and external factors. Internal factors include low self-control, emotional instability, the need for social recognition, and the desire to conform to peer groups. External factors include inadequate parental attention and supervision, family disharmony, negative peer influence, unfavorable social environments, social media exposure, and weak supervision by schools and communities. These interconnected factors increase the likelihood that adolescents will engage in delinquent behavior.

Addressing juvenile delinquency requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders. The family, as the primary educational environment, plays a crucial role in providing care, supervision, and effective communication with adolescents. Schools also bear significant responsibility through character education, guidance and counseling services, and the provision of positive extracurricular activities. Furthermore, communities, together with law enforcement agencies, must create a safe environment and implement continuous guidance and preventive programs to reduce adolescents' vulnerability to gangster group influence.

Numerous studies have examined juvenile delinquency, including those conducted by Nurhasanah (2019), Iskandar (2019), Irvan Matondang (2011), and Allisya Deta Krisna Dewi (2020). These studies have explored the forms of juvenile delinquency, the contributing factors, and adolescents' motivations for joining particular groups. However, research specifically focusing on the problems experienced by adolescents aged 12–15 who join the W13K gangster group in Tegal City, as well as examining the contributing factors and possible solutions from the perspectives of adolescents, parents, and community leaders, remains very limited.

Based on the above background, this study aims to analyze the problems faced by adolescents aged 12–15 who are members of the W13K gangster group in Tegal City, identify the factors contributing to their involvement in the group, and formulate alternative solutions through the collaborative efforts of families, schools, communities, and relevant authorities. These efforts are expected to reduce juvenile delinquency and support adolescents' positive development.

2 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was selected to gain an in-depth understanding of the factors contributing to and the alternative solutions for the problems faced by adolescents aged 12–15 years who joined the W13K gangster group in Tegal City. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and B involving informants who were purposively selected based on predetermined criteria relevant to the objectives of the study.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Research Site and Participant Characteristics

This study was conducted in Tegal City, Central Java, Indonesia. The city has experienced increasing social challenges among adolescents, including involvement in youth gangs such as W13K. The participants consisted of four male adolescents aged 13–15 years who had been involved in the W13K gang, four parents, and one community leader. The participants were selected purposively to obtain comprehensive information regarding the causes of adolescent involvement in gangs and possible solutions.

3.2 Forms of Juvenile Delinquency among W13K Members

The findings revealed that adolescents involved in W13K engaged in several forms of juvenile delinquency. These behaviors were classified into four categories.

3.2.1 Delinquency Causing Physical Harm

All adolescent participants admitted having been involved in physical fights. The main causes included teasing among peers, conflicts between groups, emotional instability, peer pressure, and the desire to defend group solidarity. Most participants expressed regret after the incidents and acknowledged that violence did not solve their problems. Parents, schools, and community members generally responded by providing counseling, increasing supervision, and encouraging reconciliation.

3.2.2 Delinquency Causing Material Loss

The study found different levels of material-related delinquency among participants. Minor offenses included damaging friends' belongings, whereas more serious behaviors involved vandalism, theft, and extortion. These behaviors were mainly influenced by peer pressure, poor emotional control, and participation in gang activities. Parents emphasized responsibility, honesty, and compensation for damaged property, while community leaders preferred family-based conflict resolution.

3.2.3 Social Delinquency

Most participants reported that they had never abused illegal drugs or engaged in free sexual behavior. However, one participant admitted having experienced both due to curiosity, peer influence, and lack of parental supervision. Parents and community leaders consistently emphasized religious guidance, communication, supervision, and participation in positive social activities as preventive measures.

3.3 Factors Contributing to Gang Involvement

The findings indicate that adolescent involvement in the W13K gang was influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors included emotional instability, curiosity, identity exploration, and weak self-control. External factors consisted of peer influence, family problems, inadequate parental supervision, school-related issues, and negative social environments. Peer pressure emerged as the most dominant factor encouraging adolescents to join the gang and participate in delinquent behaviors.

3.4 Alternative Solutions

Based on interviews with adolescents, parents, and the community leader, several preventive strategies were identified. Parents emphasized improving communication, strengthening supervision, limiting risky social interactions, and providing moral and religious education. Schools were expected to enhance counseling services and character education, while communities were encouraged to organize positive youth activities, strengthen social control, and collaborate with families and schools in preventing juvenile delinquency.

4 CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that adolescents aged 12–15 years who joined the W13K gang in Tegal City became involved in various forms of juvenile delinquency, including physical violence, material-related offenses, and social misconduct. These behaviors were primarily influenced by peer pressure, emotional instability, curiosity, weak self-control, inadequate parental supervision, family problems, and negative environmental influences. Among these factors, peer influence emerged as the most dominant reason for joining the gang.

The findings also indicate that preventing juvenile gang involvement requires collaboration among families, schools, communities, and local authorities. Parents need to strengthen communication, supervision, and moral guidance, while schools should optimize counseling services, character education, and extracurricular activities. Communities are expected to provide positive social environments and youth development programs that encourage constructive participation. Such collaborative efforts are essential to reducing juvenile delinquency and preventing adolescents from becoming involved in gang-related activities.

This study is limited to adolescents involved in the W13K gang in Tegal City; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all juvenile gangs in Indonesia. Future research is recommended to involve a larger number of participants, include different regions, and employ mixed-methods approaches to obtain a broader understanding of the factors contributing to juvenile gang involvement and effective intervention strategies.

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