



The Influence of Psychological Factors on Law Compliance Among Adolescents

Fairuz Salsabila

fairuz390@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of psychological factors on legal compliance among adolescents. The phenomenon of lawlessness by adolescents shows a significant psychological dimension in the formation of legal awareness. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with in-depth interview techniques, observations, and documentation studies in several secondary schools. The results of the study show that self-control, empathy, perception of legal authority, and social environment are the main factors that influence law-abiding behavior. The formation of legal awareness through a psychological approach has proven to be more effective than normative and legalistic learning models. These findings confirm that the integration of developmental psychology in legal education can be a more sustainable strategy for fostering adolescent legal character.

Keywords: *legal psychology, legal compliance, adolescents, self-control, empathy*

Introduction

Adolescents are a social group that is in a complex stage of psychological development, where the process of searching for identity and life values is intensive. In this phase, individuals tend to experience a conflict between the desire for freedom and the need for guidance (Santrock, 2018). In the modern social context, various forms of lawlessness by adolescents show that adherence to norms has not fully grown out of self-awareness, but is more often driven by external pressures.

Sociologically, law functions as a tool of social *control* that regulates people's behavior. However, in the realm of psychology, legal compliance is not only measured by formal obedience to rules, but also by an individual's understanding, perception, and motivation of the law itself (Tyler, 2006). This means that law-abiding behavior comes from the process of internalizing moral and social values that affect a person's decision to obey the rules.

Adolescents' legal compliance often intersects with psychological aspects such as *self-control*, perception of authority, and the empathic ability to understand the impact of behavior on others (Tangney et al., 2004). Weak self-control and lack of empathy can lead to impulsive behavior and lawlessness, especially in stressful social situations or environmental temptations.

In the context of moral development, Kohlberg's theory (1981) explains that individuals who are at the conventional moral stage begin to understand the importance of social rules, but their obedience often still depends on social acceptance and fear of punishment. This means that

legal education that emphasizes the cognitive aspect alone is not enough to form a mature legal awareness.

Another psychological factor that affects is the perception of legal justice. When adolescents view that the law is enforced fairly, they tend to show obedience and trust in the legal system (Tyler & Huo, 2002). Conversely, perceptions of injustice can create feelings of distrust of legal authority and encourage resistance to rules.

Character education that integrates psychological and moral values is an effective means of fostering awareness-based legal compliance. Lickona (2004) emphasizes that the formation of moral character includes not only cognitive dimensions, but also affective and behavioral dimensions. Thus, legal compliance should be part of value education that touches all aspects of adolescent personality.

In addition to formal education, the family and social environment also have a great contribution to the formation of legal awareness. Democratic parenting, open communication, and moral example from parents can strengthen children's self-control and empathy (Bandura, 1986). On the contrary, a permissive environment for violations actually weakens legal compliance.

Based on this presentation, this study focuses on the analysis of the influence of psychological factors on legal compliance among adolescents. The ultimate goal is to formulate a conceptual model that can be used to strengthen legal awareness based on adolescent development psychology in the educational environment and society.

Research Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to understand in depth the phenomenon of legal compliance from the psychological perspective of adolescents. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to interpret the meaning behind social behavior based on individual experiences and perceptions (Creswell, 2014).

Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted with high school students, BK teachers, and school principals. Observations are carried out during learning activities and school discipline activities, while documentation includes school discipline, violation reports, and student coaching records (Moleong, 2019).

The data source consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from interviews and observations of adolescents' behavior in the school environment, while secondary data came from books, legal psychology journals, and character education documents (Sugiyono, 2021). The validity of the data was tested using source triangulation techniques and methods to ensure the consistency of information from various perspectives. In addition, *member checking* is

carried out by confirming the results of interpretation to informants so that the data obtained is truly accurate (Patton, 2015).

The data verification process was carried out continuously during the study, following the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014), which included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. This analysis helps to find patterns of relationships between psychological factors and the level of legal compliance among adolescents.

Results and Discussion

Overview of Juvenile Law Compliance

Legal compliance among adolescents is a reflection of the process of internalizing social norms and moral values that develop as they become psychologically mature. Based on observations in several secondary schools, it was found that most students understood the rule of law conceptually, but did not fully internalize these legal values in their daily behavior. This pattern shows that legal compliance is still external, namely due to supervision or sanctions, not from self-awareness.

In social interactions, adolescents often show ambiguity between understanding norms and factual behavior. For example, they know that cheating or violating school rules is wrong, but they do it anyway because of situational factors or peer pressure. This phenomenon indicates that psychological aspects such as self-control and social conformity greatly influence their legal behavior (Tangney et al., 2004).

In addition, school and family environmental factors play an important role in shaping legal compliance patterns. Schools with a consistent disciplinary system and an empathetic coaching approach show lower rates of violations. On the contrary, an authoritarian environment without a psychological approach actually gives rise to resistance and rebellious behavior among adolescents (Bandura, 1986).

The results of the interviews also showed that some students had a negative perception of the law, especially when they saw inconsistencies between rules and practices in society. Perceptions of injustice or legal inequality can decrease their motivation to obey the rules (Tyler & Huo, 2002). Therefore, legal compliance needs to be developed not only through the introduction of rules, but also through the formation of a positive perception of justice.

In general, the picture of juvenile legal compliance reflects the existence of strong moral potential, but it still requires the support of the education system and the environment that are able to direct this potential towards stable and sustainable legal awareness. This is in line with the view of Lickona (2004) that character education must be directed at strengthening moral values embedded in daily behavior, not just ethical knowledge.

Psychological Factors Affecting Compliance

Psychological factors play a central role in explaining why some adolescents obey the law while others do not. One of the dominant factors is self-control. Adolescents with high self-control tend to be better able to resist impulsive impulses to break rules, while those with low self-control are more prone to commit actions that go against the norm (Tangney et al., 2004).

The second factor is empathy, which is the ability to understand the feelings of others and put oneself in different social situations. Adolescents who have high empathy usually show concern for the impact of their behavior on others, so they tend to avoid breaking the law. Conversely, low empathy is often a trigger for aggressive, intimidating, or rule-breaking behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

In addition, the perception of legal justice is also a determinant of compliance. When adolescents see the legal system and order in their environment applied fairly and consistently, they will show greater compliance. However, if the law is perceived to be biased or discriminatory, trust in legal authority decreases and resistive behavior emerges (Tyler, 2006).

Internal and external motivational factors also play a role in shaping legal compliance. Internal motivation arises from moral awareness and personal values, while external motivation usually arises from the threat of punishment or social pressure. Education that overemphasizes external motivation tends to result in pseudo-compliance, which easily fades when supervision is reduced (Ajzen, 1991).

Finally, social environments such as friendships, social media, and school culture help strengthen or weaken the influence of these psychological factors. An environment that values honesty, discipline, and responsibility will strengthen adolescent self-control and empathy. On the contrary, a permissive environment towards violations actually weakens legal awareness and normalizes non-compliant behavior.

The Role of Education and the Social Environment

Formal education plays an important role in shaping legal awareness based on moral psychology. Schools not only function as a place for the transfer of legal knowledge, but also as a space for the formation of ethical legal character and behavior. Teachers have a strategic role in instilling legal values through participatory learning methods, case discussions, and moral reflection (Lickona, 2004).

The implementation of psychological-based legal education can be carried out through a humanistic learning approach that pays attention to the emotional and social needs of students. Learning models such as *service learning* and legal case simulations can help adolescents

understand the social context of the law while internalizing the values of justice and responsibility (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

In addition to educational institutions, the family environment is also a crucial factor in the formation of law-abiding behavior. Parenting that prioritizes open communication and moral example will strengthen children's self-control. On the other hand, an authoritarian family or neglect of moral education can trigger adolescents' deviant behavior or apathy towards the law (Bandura, 1986).

In the context of modern society, the influence of social media on adolescent legal awareness cannot be ignored either. Media can be a positive learning tool when used to spread moral and legal values, but it can also be a source of disinformation that encourages deviant behavior. Therefore, legal digital literacy is an important need in today's adolescent education (Santrock, 2018).

These overall findings suggest that the establishment of legal compliance requires synergy between formal education, family, and the social environment. When psychological and moral values are instilled consistently in all these domains, adolescents will grow up to be law-abiding individuals not only because of obligation, but because of moral awareness and mature social responsibility.

Conclusion

This study shows that adolescents' legal compliance is not only influenced by legal knowledge or sanctions, but especially by internal psychological factors such as self-control, empathy, perception of justice, and moral environment. The integration of legal education with developmental psychology approaches has proven to be more effective in forming sustainable legal awareness.

Legal psychology-based character education can be a coaching model that not only emphasizes rules, but also builds moral awareness and social responsibility. Thus, legal compliance can grow as an intrinsic value, not solely due to external pressures. The family and school environment need to work together to strengthen adolescents' self-control and empathy through positive role models and communication. A repressive approach to lawlessness should be balanced with educational strategies that foster understanding and responsibility.

In the long run, legal awareness rooted in moral psychology will shape a younger generation that is not only law-abiding, but also has integrity, social sensitivity, and a sense of justice. Therefore, humanistic and psychological legal guidance needs to be part of the national education system.

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