

Klithih as an Expression of Adolescent Identity Crisis in Yogyakarta

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of klithih in Yogyakarta has shifted in meaning from a neutral activity of wandering aimlessly to acts of random street violence committed by adolescents. This behavior not only disrupts public safety but also reflects an underlying identity crisis experienced by youth. According to Erik Erikson's psychosocial development theory, adolescence is marked by the stage of identity vs. role confusion, a critical period for identity formation. Failure to navigate this stage successfully may lead to deviant behaviors. This study aims to understand adolescent involvement in klithih as a manifestation of unsuccessful identity development. Using a qualitative approach with a phenomenological perspective, the study explores psychosocial dynamics, social environmental influences, and the construction of meaning related to the self-identity of klithih perpetrators. The findings indicate that klithih serves as an expression of identity confusion, exacerbated by weak social support, a strong need for recognition, and peer group solidarity. These insights highlight the importance of psychosocial-based interventions and the reinforcement of family and educational roles in supporting adolescents' identity formation processes.

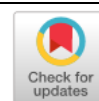
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INTRODUCTION

The term klithih comes from the Javanese language and originally had a neutral meaning, referring to the activity of walking around or wandering aimlessly. However, over time, the meaning of klithih has shifted to become a popular term referring to acts of street violence committed by groups of teenagers at random and without clear motive (Wahyudi, 2021). In the social context of Yogyakarta society, klithih has become a symbol of juvenile delinquency that threatens public safety. From a criminological perspective, this phenomenon falls under the category of juvenile delinquency, which refers to deviant behaviour committed by individuals who have not yet reached the legal age of adulthood (Soekanto, 1982). According to Santrock (2011), juvenile delinquency often stems from the unmet psychosocial needs of adolescents, including the need for identity, social recognition, and a sense of belonging.

In Erik Erikson's psychosocial development theory, adolescents are in the fifth stage of development, namely Identity vs. Role Confusion. At this stage, individuals strive to form a stable sense of identity through the exploration of values, beliefs, and group affiliations (Erikson, 1968). Failure to progress through this stage, for example due to a lack of social support or failure to find a meaningful role, can lead adolescents to identity confusion (role confusion), which often manifests itself in deviant behaviour.

Several studies indicate that klithih is a form of expression of the identity crisis experienced by adolescents in a socially and culturally unsupportive context. According to Widiatmaka (2020), adolescents' involvement in klithih groups is not solely due to criminal

intent but also stems from a need for recognition and existence amid weak family bonds and a supportive social environment. In addition, the collective culture and strong group solidarity among Yogyakarta teenagers also play a role in reinforcing this phenomenon. In the view of Hadi and Nugroho (2019), teenagers who do not receive identity validation from a positive environment tend to seek a place in groups that actually reinforce aggressive behaviour as a form of self-affirmation.

Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the number of cases of juvenile delinquency has increased significantly each year. In 2018, 3,145 adolescents aged ≤ 18 years were recorded as perpetrators of juvenile delinquency and criminal acts, while in 2019 the number increased to 3,280 cases, in 2020 it rose to 4,123 cases, and in 2021 the number of juvenile delinquency cases in Indonesia reached 6,325 cases. This means that from 2018 to 2021, juvenile delinquency increased by 10.7%. (BPS, 2021) (Ma'arif, 2024)

There has been a noticeable change in juvenile delinquency. Initially, juvenile delinquency only occurred among teenagers, but now the people of Yogyakarta are beginning to feel uneasy about actions that tend to lead to criminal acts that are legally contrary to criminal law. Today's teenagers have crossed the line. Many teenagers engage in abnormal behaviour such as drug use, smoking, gang fights, theft, and other criminal acts that deviate from societal norms.

One type of juvenile delinquency that causes social conflict and violence in Yogyakarta society is known as klithih. Initially, klithih was used by teenagers to demonstrate the existence of their community in Yogyakarta. However, now klithih has become a source of social conflict and violence targeting anyone on the streets, including civilians (Jatmiko, 2021). Klithih is a form of juvenile delinquency characterised by sporadic violence in Yogyakarta (Lubis, Lessy, & Sibyan, 2023). According to Jogja Police Watch (JPW), there were at least 12 klithih cases in Yogyakarta in 2023, which could jeopardise Yogyakarta's reputation as a student city.

The rise of the disturbing phenomenon of klithih in Yogyakarta society warrants research to analyse the causes and efforts to overcome it. Klithih is a unique phenomenon because it involves teenagers in crimes against the law. Thus, the phenomenon of klithih cannot be understood solely as a problem of juvenile delinquency, but also as a social and psychological symptom closely related to the dynamics of identity development. Therefore, a psychosocial approach is important to fully understand the root causes of the problem and relevant interventions.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with phenomenological data. This approach was chosen because the study aims to understand the meaning of adolescents' experiences related to the role of community and peers in the phenomenon of klithih in Yogyakarta. Phenomenological studies allow researchers to explore how adolescents construct their social experiences in community and peer group environments, and how these interactions shape their involvement in violent behaviour. In this study, data was collected through three main methods: interviews, non-participatory observation, and documentary analysis. Observations were conducted in community environments or places where adolescents gather to observe social dynamics, interaction patterns, and community structures. In the documentation study, documentation in the form of media reports, police reports, and community archives relevant to the klithih phenomenon were used as supplementary research data. In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with flexible guidelines to explore the experiences, perspectives, and meanings that adolescents assign to their community and peer relationships in the context of klithih behaviour.

The main instrument in this study was the researcher himself as the key (human instrument). In addition, a semi-structured interview guide was used, which was developed based on the research objectives and Erikson's psychosocial theory framework. Several aspects asked in the interview included: patterns of adolescent interaction in the community, the

influence of peers on adolescent behavioural decisions, and adolescents' perceptions of support or pressure from the community and peers.

The subjects in this study consisted of adolescents who had direct involvement or close experience with klithih behaviour, community members who interacted with adolescents, and peers of klithih perpetrators. The subject selection technique used purposive sampling, with inclusion criteria as follows: adolescents aged 15–19 years, who have been involved, nearly involved, or have close friends involved in klithih behaviour, and are willing to provide information without coercion from any party and voluntarily provide interview results for research purposes. This study was conducted in the Special Region of Yogyakarta Province, specifically in areas where the phenomenon of klithih juvenile delinquency exists, based on police data and reports in social and digital media. This study involved two adolescent informants, GP and DS. GP is a 16-year-old second-year junior high school student and an only child who is quite spoiled in his family. DS is an 18-year-old first-year senior high school student from a religious family with a middle-class economic background.

The data analysis used in this study employs a phenomenological approach to explore and understand the essence of the subjects' subjective experiences in depth. Phenomenology focuses on how individuals experience a particular phenomenon, with the aim of revealing the essence of that experience. Therefore, the data analysis technique in this study was carried out systematically through the typical stages of phenomenological analysis. The demographic data of the informants can be seen in the following table.

Tabel 1. Demographics of Informants

	Informant 1	Informant 2
Name	GP	DK
Age	16	18
Gender	Male	Male
Background	Only child and quite spoiled by his family. Influential in his group	From a fairly religious family with middle-class economic status.

Theoretical Basis

Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory of Adolescence

This study utilises Erik H. Erikson's (1902) psychosocial development theory. Erikson was the first to develop this theory, introducing more realistic features of social life and cultural functions. Erikson's theory is highly selective because it is closely related to the ego, one of the aspects that approaches human personality, emphasising the importance of changes occurring in human life, and explicitly describing how human personality develops within an environment. Erikson believed that personality dynamics are always the result of a combination of basic biological needs and their expression as social actions. Specifically, the stages of a person's life from birth until the interaction of social influences with a physically and psychologically mature organism (Thahir, 2018).

Erikson developed a chart that sequences eight distinct stages of ego development in psychosocial terms, which became known as the 'eight stages of human development.' Erikson claimed that each stage produces an epigenetic or continuous emergence. Furthermore, Erikson claimed that each psychosocial stage is accompanied by a crisis. Inconsistencies in each component of personality within each crisis constitute a conflict that must be resolved. Conflict is an important component in Erikson's theory, because interpersonal development and growth in an environment involves an increase in vulnerability to attack depending on the function of the ego at each stage.



Figure 1: Erikson's Eight Stages of Psychosocial Development

The eight stages of personality development according to Erikson have the main characteristic that each stage is, on the one hand, biological and, on the other hand, social, progressing through crises between two polarities. The eight stages of development that every human being goes through according to Erikson are as follows: Trust vs. Mistrust at ages 0–8, Autonomy vs. Shame, Doubt at ages 1–3, Initiative vs. Guilt at ages 4–5, Industry vs. Inferiority at ages 6–11, Identity vs. Identity Confusion at ages 12–20, Intimacy vs. Isolation at ages 21–40, Generativity vs. Stagnation at ages 41–65, and Ego Integrity vs. Despair at ages 65+ (Thahir, 2018).

During adolescence, the psychosocial development stage is at the identity vs. identity confusion stage. According to Erikson (in Thahir, 2018), the primary task of adolescents is to resolve the identity crisis versus identity confusion. Identity vs. identity confusion is the psychosocial development stage where adolescents strive to build a cohesive sense of self-existence, including their social roles. When the crisis at this stage is successfully overcome, the individual will have a better understanding of themselves. When it fails, identity confusion will occur. Adolescents do not create their identity by imitating others, but rather by transforming and synthesising their previous identifications into a larger 'new psychological structure.'

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Identity Confusion and Crisis

Klithih perpetrators experience confusion about their self-concept and their role in society. This confusion is known as an identity crisis (Inayah, Yusuf, & Umam, 2021). An identity crisis occurs when a person attempts to develop their self-concept. The issue of integrating identities that are useful for the past, present, and future shows that each klithih perpetrator has a different background. For example, research by Fuadi, Muti'ah, and Hartosujono (2019) found that parental history, problematic families, relationships with organisations, relationships with the environment, and individual character all influence klithih behaviour. Interview excerpt:

"Kalau ditanya kenapa kok bisa ikutan (melakukan aksi klithih) aku juga bingung intinya saya pengen dilihat keren aja sama temen-temen ditongkrongan". (GP)

"Orang tua jelas gak tau (ketika melakukan aksi klithih), masyarakat apa lagi, taunya cuma aku sering pulang malam gitu aja dan mereka juga gak tanya-tanya habis dari mana atau habis ngapain gitu, mereka diem aja". (GP)

"Aku merasa perlu pengakuan dari orang lain tapi di sisi lain aku juga bingung dan gak tau kenapa harus ada pengakuan dari orang lain, suka-suka aku saja toh keluargaku juga gak peduli sama apa yang aku lakuin (ketika melakukan aksi). (DK).

An identity crisis occurs when adolescents feel vulnerable yet simultaneously strengthen their self-efficacy (Erikson, 1989). An identity crisis is triggered by an individual's social environment. It is caused by an individual's failure to understand their role within the family, their place in society, and a lack of control over society. This condition makes it difficult for people to absorb and understand existing values and standards. Research findings by Widayanti (2019) highlight the importance of the family's role in suppressing or preventing klithih behaviour among adolescents in Yogyakarta. Additionally, the results of Simatupang's (2023) research reveal the importance of society's role in preventing adolescent delinquency.

Adolescents who fail to overcome their identity crisis will behave in ways that deviate from social norms, including engaging in klithih behaviour (Pratiwi, 2018). The identity crisis they face drives them to seek out groups that can provide a platform or space for them to develop their identity. Someone who is struggling to find their identity will be easily influenced by their environment, so if they find a new environment that makes them feel comfortable, they will join that group without thinking twice. When people join a group, they will obey the rules, even if those rules are very bad.

On the other hand, if the tendency towards ego identification is greater than the tendency towards identity confusion, then there is little room for tolerance among those who share the same environment. Erikson refers to this as maladaptive behaviour, or fanaticism. People with this fanatical nature believe that their ideas, methods, and approaches are the best. If identity turmoil is stronger than ego identity, Erikson refers to it as denial. People with this trait deny their participation in the adult world or society, so they seek identity elsewhere, such as within groups free from society's binding demands and willing to accept and recognise them as members of the group (Thahir, 2018). According to Erikson (1968), adolescents who successfully face the identity crisis or find their identity will gain a 'sense of optimal identity.' A 'sense of optimal identity' is experienced as psychosocial well-being, namely a sense of security and comfort within oneself, an awareness of the path one is taking, and the ability to accept oneself and others.

Peer Group Influence

Klithih is an anarchic act carried out by gangs or groups that cause casualties (Putra & Suryadinata, 2020). The impact of klithih perpetrators' activities ranges from vandalism to injuring others, and even death. Teenagers use this to demonstrate their group's existence and identity. Teenagers tend to form groups with similar backgrounds and aspirations, known as gangs, while looking for friends. These gangs or groups then develop a new identity in the name of the group with specific ideas and goals that are understood by all members of the group (Jatmiko, 2021). Interview excerpt:

"Iya ada, aku ikut sebuah geng di tongkrongan yang kumpulannya itu temen-temen yang biasanya sama-sama nongkrong di warkop samping sekolah yang orangnya dari berbagai sekolah ada yang SMP ada juga yang sudah SMA. Biasanya kami nongkrong mulai dari pulang sekolah sampai malam tapi tidak setiap hari, kalau bolos pun kami juga bareng-bareng satu geng yaa meskipun gak semua anggota geng ikut sihh." (GP)

"Ikut geng disekolah aku, itu gengnya sudah ada sejak dulu sih (turun-temurun dari kakak kelas). Bisanya sebelum menyerang sekolah lain kami kumpul dulu buat atur strategi, para alumni sekolah juga ada bisanya disitu (ikut menyerang sekolah lain)." (DK)

For perpetrators of klithih, the group can provide positive reinforcement for adolescents who engage in violent activities. Perpetrators of klithih feel valued or respected by group members for their actions, which can perpetuate and expand klithih behaviour. Adolescents who are emotionally involved with their group may feel compelled to defend the group's honour or reputation. This can lead to violence as a way to express group identification and strengthen unity among members. In some cases, certain groups can foster a culture of hatred or violence. Adolescents who have been exposed will continue to have negative ideas and attitudes about other groups, making them more likely to engage in klithih behaviour. Research conducted by Marino (2020) reveals that the motive of klithih perpetrators is to maintain the existence of gangs in schools and as a means of self-expression.

In the klithih phenomenon, perpetrators are accepted, recognised, and supported. Conformity to the group is very strong, as demonstrated by their willingness to engage in brawls and attacks. They feel uncomfortable and afraid of being shunned if they do not participate in group activities, even though they are aware that these activities are dangerous to themselves and others. They also feel valued and recognised within the group. The group is also seen as a significant source of social support, even more so than family (Febriani, 2018).

Klithih perpetrators are marginalised in the social process, so they use violence to express their dissatisfaction and develop their identity. To understand the causes of klithih behaviour, it is necessary to trace its formation process, particularly the process of marginalisation and exclusion from their environment. After the development phase, which includes group formation, the next step is engaging in violent behaviour. Klithih perpetrators emerge from closed communities that do not tolerate groups that do not align with the community's vision and mission (Jatmiko, 2021).

Search for Recognition and Belonging

Klithih is a criminal activity originating from Yogyakarta and is one form of deviant behaviour among adolescents. This is triggered by adolescents who are searching for their identity or are influenced by their peers (Apriaji & Purnamasari, 2023). Peer influence can change the behaviour of adolescents who initially want to engage in deviant behaviour due to the emergence of significant influence or pressure from their peers. Friendships have a major influence on adolescent development (Santrock, 2014). Interview excerpt:

"Waktu itu (ketika melakukan aksi klithih) aku cuma ikut-ikut aja diajak teman buat ikutan. Kami boncengan berdua waktu itu pake motorku, aku yang didepan posisinya, teman-teman yang lain juga pada boncengan semua, yang belakang pada bawa sajam semua, macam-macam jenisnya ada yang bawa samurai, gear lolipop, pedang juga ada". (GP)

"Gak enak gitu rasanya kalo gak ikut, saya pernah diejek teman satu tongkrongan (karena ga ikut)". (DK).

Adolescents who are in the stage of searching for their identity tend to seek their identity outside the home and join communities of adolescents who engage in deviant behaviour. In their research, Fuadi, Muti'ah, and Hartosujono (2019) found that conformity to peers is a determining factor in delinquent behaviour. The findings of this research indicate that perpetrators are more influenced by their peer environment. A teenager's peer environment has a significant impact on the likelihood of them engaging in delinquent behaviour. Peer environments can have both positive and negative effects. If adolescents cannot choose their peer environment, their peers will have a negative influence on them. If this trend continues, juvenile delinquency is likely to escalate into criminal activities, such as klithih, one type of deviant behaviour committed by adolescents. Therefore, it is hoped that adolescents can effectively manage their peer environment to have a beneficial impact and encourage their potential.

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that the widespread behaviour of klithih among teenagers in Yogyakarta can be understood through the lens of Erikson's psychosocial development theory, particularly at the stage of identity vs identity confusion. Adolescents are in a phase of intense self-identity exploration, but an inability to resolve identity crises can drive them to engage in deviant behaviour such as klithih. Peer groups play a crucial role in shaping adolescent identity; emotional attachment and the need for recognition from the group can reinforce violent actions as a form of identity expression and group solidarity. The influence of negative peers also increases the likelihood of adolescents engaging in delinquency that escalates into criminal behaviour. Therefore, managing a healthy peer environment is crucial in supporting the formation of positive identity and preventing deviant behaviour among adolescents.

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