

Building Legal Awareness among Indonesian Adolescents in accordance with Law No. 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code: A Study by the Islamic Centre Foundation

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The enactment of Law No. 1 of 2023 on the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP) introduces significant reforms to Indonesia's criminal justice system, making legal literacy among adolescents increasingly important to ensure compliance with the law and responsible citizenship. Adolescents represent a strategic group for legal education because they are at a developmental stage where social interaction, digital engagement, and decision-making may expose them to potential legal risks. This study aims to analyze the role of the Islamic Centre Foundation in building legal awareness among Indonesian adolescents in accordance with Law No. 1 of 2023. The research employs an empirical legal approach using qualitative methods through observations, interviews, and document analysis involving foundation administrators, legal educators, and adolescent participants. The findings indicate that legal awareness programs implemented by the Foundation including legal education seminars, interactive discussions, character development activities, and community outreach have improved participants' understanding of fundamental criminal law provisions, strengthened awareness of legal rights and obligations, and encouraged law-abiding behavior. Nevertheless, challenges remain, including limited legal literacy, inconsistent participation, and the need for more innovative educational approaches utilizing digital platforms. The study concludes that community-based legal education conducted by civil society organizations plays a significant role in promoting legal awareness among adolescents and supports the effective implementation of Law No. 1 of 2023 while fostering a culture of legal compliance and responsible citizenship in Indonesia.

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1. Introduction

Crime figures for the period from January to 22 September 2025 in North Sumatra Province stand at 40,301 cases, with 43,425 victims and 53,866 individuals reported as suspects.[1], hlm. 1-2 This makes North Sumatra a crime-prone region. It also places the North Sumatra Regional Police in second place for the highest crime rate in their jurisdiction, after the Jakarta Metropolitan Regional Police. In third place is the East Java Regional Police, with a total of 24,346 cases.

To be more specific, the crime figures for North Sumatra Province show that the offences are being committed by young people. This points to high crime rates in North Sumatra in 2025–2026. As many as 68 per cent of residents in the city of Medan feel unsafe in their neighbourhoods. This is a cause for concern for the government, which must improve security facilities and ensure community involvement in security programmes.[2], hlm. 1-2 This is evident from the various problems occurring in the city of Medan, such as motor vehicle theft (commonly known as 'Begal' or 'Curanmor'), which is becoming an increasingly worrying issue with each passing day.

Street crime is a form of crime that occurs in public spaces; it is characterised by being open, spontaneous and often involving violence or threats against victims. These crimes include acts such as theft, snatch-and-run, extortion, fights between groups, vandalism, and traffic offences committed in an aggressive manner that endangers other road users. The fact is that street crime frequently occurs within communities, with young people as the perpetrators. This creates a dilemma as to how the maximum penalty can be enforced when the crime is committed by young people. This is referred to as the point of contact between the criminal justice system and the child's first encounter with the law. Consequently, the juvenile criminal justice system represents a criminal justice system specifically tailored to children. [3], hlm. 151

The fundamental changes to Indonesia's criminal justice system brought about by the entry into force of Law No. 1 of 2023 on the National Criminal Code mark a new chapter in the development of national law, one that is more oriented towards the values of justice, humanity and the nation's culture.[4], hlm. 253 The National Criminal Code serves not only as a repressive instrument for combating crime, but also embodies a preventive and educational spirit, including in fostering legal awareness amongst the public from an early age, particularly amongst young people. North Sumatra Province ranks second among the provinces with the highest crime rates in Indonesia, whilst the North Sumatra Regional Police ranks as one of the police forces with the highest crime rates in the country. This is evident from data obtained from the National Crime Analysis Centre (Pusiknas) of the Indonesian National Police's Criminal Investigation Directorate (Bareskrim) for the period from 2025 to early April 2026.[1]

Table 4: Crime rates in Indonesia from 2025 to 2026

Province	Crime Figures
North Sumatra	18. 836
West Java	15.797
Jakarta	13.028
East Java	11. 872

The tabulated crime data is, of course, an accumulation of the number of cases across the regencies and cities within the province of North Sumatra. The regencies and cities with high crime rates include Deli Serdang Regency and the City of Medan. Crime is caused by several factors, such as economic circumstances, social circles, available opportunities and so on. These factors, as they manifest in Indonesia, have had a negative impact. Many members of the public commit wrongful acts solely to meet their basic needs. Therefore, a critical analysis is required to understand the causes of criminal behaviour, which can be undertaken using criminological theories. Although abstract, these theories are necessary to examine why some people are able to adhere to social and legal norms, whilst others violate them. These theories are not only important for academic and research activities, but also for the education of citizens.

Based on the latest data from the end of 2025, the Medan City Police recorded that they had solved 112 (one hundred and twelve) criminal cases throughout that year. As part of these investigations, the police arrested 140 (one hundred and forty) suspects, primarily in connection with motor vehicle theft (commonly referred to as 'curanmor') and drug offences. Juvenile delinquency in the Deli Serdang Regency is indeed a serious concern, as several cases have led to criminal and anarchic acts, such as motorbike gang processions, the use of bladed weapons, street brawls, and vehicle hijackings.

Focusing on secondary school pupils in Deli Serdang Regency, social dynamics indicate that adolescents are in a phase of self-discovery, making them vulnerable to environmental influences, both positive and negative. Phenomena of juvenile delinquency, such as fighting, breaches of social norms, and involvement in potentially anarchic groups, reflect the still low level of legal understanding and awareness amongst students. The lack of legal literacy further exacerbates this situation, as it should be integrated into both formal and non-formal education processes.

The entry into force of the National Criminal Code has brought about a number of paradigm shifts, such as the strengthening of the concept of restorative justice, recognition of the 'living law' within society, and adaptation to evolving social values. However, the implementation of these new norms has not yet been fully understood by the wider public, including students. This has created a gap between the normative existence of the law (*das sollen*) and the reality of legal understanding within society (*das sein*).

Schools, as educational institutions, play a strategic role in instilling legal awareness. However, in reality, legal education at upper secondary school level remains limited, often merely incorporated into subjects such as Civic Education without contextual and practical depth. Furthermore, developments in technology and social media are influencing the behaviour of young people; these platforms can often become a means of spreading deviant behaviour if not balanced by an adequate understanding of the law.

Therefore, systematic efforts are required to foster legal awareness amongst young people, particularly following the entry into force of the National Criminal Code. This is in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which is one of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the United Nations (UN), focusing on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. This goal emphasises the importance of creating a peaceful and inclusive society, ensuring access to justice for all sections of society, and building effective, transparent, accountable and responsive institutions. SDG 16 stems from the realisation that sustainable development cannot be achieved without social stability, legal certainty, respect for human rights and good governance.

The main challenges in law enforcement lie in low legal awareness and legal literacy, a lack of internalisation of legal values in daily life, and the sub-optimal role of educational institutions in educating students about changes in the law. Consequently, a comprehensive, collaborative and sustainable educational approach is required to bridge this gap, so that the younger generation can become law-abiding, responsible and aware members of society.

Legal awareness is a key aspect of law enforcement. It is equally crucial amongst the younger generation, given the dynamic changes to national criminal legislation, which is now based on Law No. 1 of 2023.[5], hlm. 93 This legal transition demands a deeper understanding of the juvenile justice system to ensure the protection of children's rights in the future. The resolution of cases involving juvenile offenders must always prioritise the principle of restorative justice, which guarantees the fulfilment of children's rights as mandated within the national regulatory framework. This approach is centred on the best interests of the child, prioritising diversion and social rehabilitation to treat offenders with dignity. The implementation of these mechanisms is essential to mitigate negative psychological impacts and safeguard the continued mental development of children in conflict with the law.

Furthermore, strengthening the internalisation of Pancasila values amongst young people is regarded as a fundamental strategy for reducing rates of deviant behaviour and improving compliance with the law within both educational and social settings. This transformation requires synergy between preventive approaches based on the nation's noble values and corrective legal protection mechanisms, in order to minimise the involvement of the younger generation in criminal offences. Furthermore, crime prevention policies must remain dynamic, keeping pace with increasingly sophisticated *modus operandi* to ensure the effectiveness of judicial policies and their enforcement. Efforts to integrate these sentencing guidelines are not only aimed at modernising the colonial-era legal system, but also at aligning the codification of primary legislation with the values of Pancasila and the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution. This strategic step reflects a systematic effort to replace the individualistic colonial legal paradigm with a framework that is more responsive to the nation's identity, such as the spirit of mutual cooperation and consensus-building. The application of the principle of restorative justice is in line with the concept of 'islak' in Islamic law, which prioritises the restoration of the status quo through mediation to achieve substantive justice. The integration of these

values into the national criminal law framework reflects the state's commitment to upholding the rule of law, which is oriented not only towards formal legality but also towards social welfare based on Pancasila.

Therefore, this research emphasises that concrete steps are urgently needed to internalise the values of restorative justice through education involving community leaders and legal practitioners, with a view to fostering an inclusive legal perspective following the entry into force of the 2023 Criminal Code. This effort is crucial given the development of communication technology, which often acts as a trigger for rising crime rates among young people, thereby necessitating an adaptation of law enforcement that does not merely prioritise physical punishment. The reformulation of the criminal justice system for children in conflict with the law must be grounded in the principles of Pancasila in order to create a balance between moral, humanitarian and social considerations.

Furthermore, non-penal approaches through mediation and family deliberation can serve as effective tools in reducing the escalation of social conflict within the community. Moreover, the role of educational institutions such as the Islamic Centre Foundation is vital in integrating an understanding of customary and national law so that the younger generation has behavioural guidelines that are in line with Indonesia's cultural identity. The recognition of the existence of customary law in written regulations following the enactment of the current legislation represents a crucial moment for harmonising local norms within the structure of modern criminal law.

2. Methods

This study employed an empirical legal research approach with a qualitative research design to examine the role of the Islamic Centre Foundation in building legal awareness among Indonesian adolescents in accordance with Law No. 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code. An empirical legal approach was selected because the study focuses not only on legal norms but also on how those norms are understood, implemented, and internalized through community-based legal education activities.

The research was conducted at the Islamic Centre Foundation in North Sumatra. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the Foundation's legal awareness programs. The participants consisted of Foundation administrators, legal education facilitators, religious leaders, and adolescent participants who had attended legal awareness activities. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and field documentation. Secondary data consisted of statutory regulations, academic journals, books, government reports, and other relevant documents concerning legal awareness, juvenile delinquency, and Law No. 1 of 2023.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed methodological triangulation by comparing information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentary evidence. Source triangulation was also conducted by comparing information from different participant groups. Member checking was performed by returning interview summaries to selected participants to confirm the accuracy of the researchers' interpretations, while peer debriefing was used to minimize researcher bias during the analytical process.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. First, data reduction was conducted continuously throughout the research process. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, observation notes were organized, and documentary evidence was systematically classified. The researchers then coded the data by identifying statements related to legal awareness, legal literacy, adolescents' understanding of criminal law, educational strategies implemented by the Foundation, supporting factors, and implementation challenges. Similar codes were grouped into broader categories and subsequently developed into analytical themes that addressed the

research objectives. Information unrelated to the research questions or lacking sufficient relevance was excluded to maintain analytical focus.

Second, data display was performed by organizing the reduced data into structured matrices, thematic tables, and narrative descriptions. Data from interviews, observations, and documentary sources were compared to identify recurring patterns, similarities, and inconsistencies among participants' responses. [6], hlm. 59 This process enabled the researchers to systematically examine relationships between legal education activities, adolescents' legal awareness, behavioral changes, and the implementation of Law No. 1 of 2023. The organized presentation facilitated comprehensive interpretation while maintaining transparency in the analytical process.

Third, conclusion drawing and verification were undertaken by interpreting the patterns and themes emerging from the displayed data. Preliminary conclusions were continuously verified through repeated examination of the original transcripts, comparison across different data sources, triangulation results, and participant confirmation (member checking). Conclusions were considered valid only after consistent findings were identified across multiple sources of evidence. This iterative verification process ensured that the final interpretations accurately reflected the empirical data and enhanced the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings.

By integrating systematic data collection procedures, triangulation techniques, and the interactive analytical model, this study provides a transparent and replicable methodological framework for examining community-based legal awareness programs and their contribution to the implementation of Law No. 1 of 2023 among Indonesian adolescents.

3. Result And Discussion

The Importance of Legal Awareness in Upholding the Pillars of the Law

The enactment of Law No. 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code (KUHP) has brought about fundamental changes to Indonesia's criminal justice system, including the strengthening of the principles of restorative justice, the protection of human rights, and increased public participation in fostering a culture of respect for the law. However, the effectiveness of the law's implementation is determined not only by the quality of its legal substance, but also by the level of legal awareness amongst the public, particularly young people as a group vulnerable to becoming involved in various forms of criminal offences. The high crime rate in North Sumatra Province indicates that legal reform has not yet been fully accompanied by an increase in public legal awareness. Between 1 January and 22 September 2025, a total of 40,301 criminal cases were recorded, involving 43,425 victims and 53,866 suspects. Although these figures do not entirely involve young people, law enforcement agencies indicate that various forms of criminal offences involving young people such as gang fights, drug abuse, violence, bullying and digital media-based crimes remain recurring issues. This situation indicates that there remains a gap between the establishment of legal norms through the revision of the Criminal Code and the level of internalisation of legal values amongst the younger generation.

This phenomenon can be analysed using Lawrence M. Friedman's theory of legal systems, which states that the effectiveness of a legal system is determined by three interrelated elements, namely legal substance, legal structure and legal culture. In the context of this research, legal substance has been updated through Act No. 1 of 2023, which accommodates societal developments and human rights principles. The legal structure is also in place through the police, the public prosecutor's office, the courts, correctional institutions, and various government bodies responsible for law enforcement. However, the high crime rate, including criminal offences involving young people, indicates that the element of legal culture remains a weak point. Many young people do not yet understand their rights, obligations, or the

legal consequences of their actions; consequently, compliance with the law is driven more by fear of punishment than by a sense of civic responsibility. Consequently, crime statistics not only indicate a rise in legal violations but also serve as an indicator that the development of a legal culture has not yet progressed optimally. These findings demonstrate that the successful implementation of Law No. 1 of 2023 is heavily dependent on strengthening the legal culture through legal education within the community.

In this context, the Islamic Centre Foundation acts as a civil society organisation that bridges the gap between the implementation of the law and the development of a culture of law at the community level. The programmes implemented are not only focused on conveying information regarding criminal provisions, but also integrate character education, religious values, social responsibility, and an understanding of the rights and obligations of citizens. Based on interviews with the foundation's management and activity facilitators, legal awareness-raising is carried out through legal seminars, interactive discussions, Islamic studies, youth leadership training, and community mentoring, which regularly involve participants from among school pupils and university students.

Research findings indicate that these activities have a positive impact on enhancing participants' legal awareness. Before participating in the programme, the majority of participants understood the law merely as a set of rules governing prohibitions and criminal sanctions. After taking part in the awareness-raising activities, participants began to understand that the law also serves to protect the rights of every citizen, maintain social order, and promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts, as accommodated within the restorative justice paradigm under Law No. 1 of 2023. Interviews with participants also revealed an increased understanding of the legal consequences of spreading false information on social media, bullying, violence, drug abuse, and other forms of criminal offences that frequently involve young people. In addition to this increase in knowledge, the foundation's management observed changes in participants' behaviour, demonstrated by increased participation in social activities, reduced involvement in inter-group conflicts, and a growing willingness to seek advice when facing legal issues. These findings indicate that community-based legal education not only enhances legal knowledge but also shapes legal attitudes and legal behaviour, which are key indicators in the development of a culture of law.

Legal awareness is the essence of whether or not law enforcement is successful. If we examine the views of Lawrence Meir Friedman, known as the theory of legal systems, this theory is highly relevant in analysing various legal issues. Within his theory, there are three elements of a legal system, namely substance, structure and legal culture. Legal culture concerns the extent to which people comply with laws and regulations. According to J.C.T. Simorangkir and Woerjono Sastropranoto, the law consists of coercive regulations governing human behaviour within society, established by authorised official bodies; any breach of these regulations results in the imposition of specific penalties. Therefore, when assessing these legal issues, they can be examined using the theory of legal culture to analyse the problems that arise.[7], hlm.6

The level of compliance with the law can be examined through the lens of legal culture. In the case of Indonesian adolescents, legal culture is very low, as illustrated by data compiled by the National Crime Research Centre (Pusiknas) of the Indonesian National Police's Criminal Investigation Division (Bareskrim), which shows extremely high crime rates. Crime in North Sumatra is predominantly committed by young people under the age of 18. This is, in fact, ironic, as it may reflect a decline in the social status and social resilience of the community. Whether a community's social behaviour is good or bad is a manifestation of its level of compliance with the law. Philosophically speaking, the law arises from agreements and mutual understanding amongst individuals; it is through this that the law comes into being. This echoes the principle articulated by Marcus Tullius Cicero: 'Where there is society, there is law' (*Ubi societas ibi ius*). This essentially serves as an indicator that law and society are two aspects that are closely intertwined. It is also what makes the law a social product, as it is created by society through social mechanisms, namely

social interaction. Consequently, when analysing public compliance with the law, an approach centred on society must be adopted. Ideally, a preventative approach should also be taken to prevent an increase in crime rates. One such preventative measure is the implementation of legal education and awareness-raising programmes. This approach is also in line with the concepts set out in the National Criminal Code, which, through rehabilitative, restorative and reintegrative mechanisms, calls for preventative efforts and the implementation of more humane measures. Criminal policy, as part of law enforcement policy, must be capable of steering every component of the legal system in a direction that is conducive to and effective in combating crime, including fostering a culture of law-abiding behaviour amongst the public so that they are willing to participate actively in crime prevention. This public involvement is crucial because, according to G. Pieter Hoefnagels, criminal policy constitutes a rational endeavour by society in response to crime.[8], hlm. 4

Nevertheless, this study also identified a number of challenges in fostering legal awareness amongst adolescents. Firstly, the level of legal literacy remains relatively low, as the majority of adolescents have not received systematic legal education either at school or within their families. Secondly, the rise of digital media has led adolescents to obtain legal information predominantly from social media, which may not necessarily be accurate, thereby giving rise to various misunderstandings regarding legal provisions. Thirdly, the influence of peer groups is often more dominant than that of family or educational institutions, thereby encouraging deviant behaviour as a means of seeking social identity. Fourthly, legal awareness-raising activities carried out by civil society organisations remain sporadic, dependent on the availability of funding, expert staff and support from various parties, meaning that the programmes' reach is not yet optimal.

Furthermore, Legal awareness amongst Indonesian young people is essential to ensure that the law is properly enforced.[9], hlm.3 This legal awareness is of the utmost urgency and plays a vital role; it must therefore be fostered through the involvement of all stakeholders, including, without exception, legal academics and the government, working in collaboration. This is in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which relates to Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. SDG 16 is closely linked to efforts to foster a law-abiding society, thereby minimising the occurrence of offences and crimes. Consequently, a conducive social environment leads to the creation of a resilient, peaceful society that guarantees justice for all sections of the community. This concept of the SDGs stems from the realisation that sustainable development cannot be achieved without social stability, legal certainty, and respect for human rights values, as well as good and trustworthy governance.

Based on these findings, a more comprehensive strategy is required to strengthen the development of legal awareness amongst young people. The government needs to integrate legal education into the school curriculum through a more contextual and case-study-based approach, so that it is easily understood by young people. Civil society organisations, including the Islamic Centre Foundation, need to expand their educational methods by utilising digital media, creative content, podcasts, short videos, mock trials and interactive discussions that are tailored to the characteristics of the younger generation. Furthermore, collaboration between the government, schools, universities, law enforcement agencies, religious leaders and civil society organisations needs to be strengthened so that legal education programmes can be implemented on a sustainable basis. Such synergy not only enhances understanding of Law No. 1 of 2023 but also fosters a legal culture that encourages compliance based on awareness, rather than solely due to the threat of criminal sanctions.

Thus, the findings of this study demonstrate that the existence of the Islamic Centre Foundation makes a significant contribution to strengthening the elements of legal culture as outlined by Lawrence Friedman. The high crime rate in North Sumatra indicates that reforms to the substance of the law and the existence

of law enforcement structures are insufficient to achieve legal compliance if not balanced by the development of a legal culture. Consequently, the community-based legal education developed by the Islamic Centre Foundation serves as a strategic instrument in supporting the implementation of Law No. 1 of 2023 through the enhancement of knowledge, the fostering of a legal mindset, and behavioural change amongst young people, leading to a society that is more legally aware and responsible.

The legal status of young people in the field of criminal law following the entry into force of Law No. 1 of 2023 on the National Criminal Code

The development of national law and the enforcement of national law require the participation of all sections of society. From a political science perspective, the establishment of a sovereign state necessitates the participation of the people. The people in question naturally comprise various age groups, one of which is adolescents. According to the World Health Organisation, adolescents are defined as individuals aged between 10 and 19 years. Meanwhile, according to Regulation of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia No. 25 of 2014, adolescents are defined as individuals aged between 10 and 18 years. In legal terminology and legislation, however, the terms 'children' and 'adults' are used. This correlates with legal capacity and lack of legal capacity. From the perspective of Law No. 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code, Article 150 states that a child is a person who has not yet reached the age of 18 (eighteen) years. Therefore, the term 'adolescent' is not explicitly defined in criminal law; instead, the law only recognises the term 'children' with an age range of 0–18 years.

The involvement of young people in the founding of the nation is of central and vital importance. This is also because young people are the nation's next generation, who will take the reins of leadership or carry the baton of the nation in the future.[10], hlm. 144 The role of young people is extremely wide-ranging, particularly with regard to law enforcement and the challenges involved in national legal development through the reform of existing laws. With regard to the status of young people following the enactment of Law No. 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code, this is divided into two categories: their status as agents of change or pioneers in law enforcement, and their status as perpetrators or victims of criminal offences.

Adolescents are regarded as agents of change or pioneers in the enforcement of the law, positioning them as the nation's next generation who will assume the reins of national leadership in the future. This was also emphasised by Indonesia's Proclamator, President Soekarno, on several occasions between 1945 and 1959. Soekarno stated that "give me 1,000 elderly people, and I shall surely uproot Mount Semeru from its foundations; give me 10 young people, and I shall shake the world". The philosophical significance of this statement lies in the vital role that young people play in upholding and sustaining a nation. There is extraordinary strength amongst the nation's youth; whilst quantity is not the key factor, what is required is the quality of these young people. This is the basis for the crucial role that young people play in nation-building, particularly in the area of law enforcement.

The status of young people when viewed as perpetrators or victims of criminal offences. Under Law No. 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code (National Criminal Code), the status of young people or children in conflict with the law has undergone a fairly fundamental paradigm shift. Previously, the penal system was more oriented towards a retributive approach that emphasised retaliation (*lex talionis*) for the acts committed by the perpetrator. The concept of *lex talionis* an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth seems to transport us back to a legal history that was obscure, lawless, savage, primitive and full of violence, from a time when humanity had not yet fully civilised itself.[11], hlm. 35 This notion conjures up images of villages filled with one-eyed youths, the result of such a primitive punishment as an eye for an eye. *Lex talionis* is readily rejected as unfit for human civilisation and, in particular, for a legal system influenced by spiritual considerations.[12], hlm. 945 Meanwhile, the National Criminal Code directs the handling of children in conflict with the law towards a restorative justice approach through diversion and rehabilitation, by

providing for special measures tailored to children. This change is based on the view that children and adolescents are still in a stage of physical, mental and social development and therefore require special protection within the law enforcement process.

The National Criminal Code stipulates that adolescents are regarded as legal persons who do not yet possess the full capacity for criminal responsibility as adults. Article 40 explains that criminal responsibility cannot be imposed on a child who, at the time of committing a criminal offence, was under 12 (twelve) years of age. This is in line with Law No. 11 of 2012 on the Juvenile Criminal Justice System, which stipulates that the age limit for criminal responsibility for children applies to those who have reached the age of 12 (twelve) years but have not yet reached the age of 18 (eighteen) years. This is, of course, not without reason. Alongside the transformation of sentencing influenced by a philosophical shift towards restorative, rehabilitative and reintegrative approaches, there is a foundation rooted in substantive legal sources in the formulation of legislation. Substantive legal sources in the formulation of laws and legislation serve as a reference in shaping legislation that addresses the substance of the legislation itself, including ideological, economic, socio-cultural and other aspects. If we refer to the sociological and psychological foundations in the formulation of legislation, criminal liability for children may be applied to children aged between 12 and under 18 years. Consequently, children under the age of 12 cannot be held criminally liable due to social and psychological factors, namely psychological considerations such as the child's emotional, intellectual and mental maturity. Children under the age of 12 certainly cannot be considered to possess stable mental, emotional and psychological development. Indeed, even 12-year-olds are still regarded as vulnerable, with their emotional and psychological maturity not yet stable.

This provision is based on the consideration that, within this age range, a person has not yet attained full psychological and emotional maturity; consequently, the legal treatment of such individuals must prioritise the principle of the best interests of the child. As a consequence of this paradigm shift, the National Criminal Code (KUHP) establishes restorative justice as the primary approach to resolving criminal cases involving children. The implementation of restorative justice is realised through the mechanism of diversion, namely the transfer of case resolution from the formal criminal justice process to a process outside the criminal justice system. Diversion aims to achieve reconciliation between the offender and the victim, resolve cases involving children in a proportionate manner, spare children from deprivation of liberty, and foster a sense of responsibility in the child. Thus, the objective of handling cases involving children is no longer focused on punishment, but rather on the restoration of social relationships between the offender, the victim and the community.

Furthermore, the National Criminal Code also reinforces the application of the dual-track system in the imposition of sanctions on children who commit criminal offences. This system allows judges to impose penalties or measures in accordance with the child's needs and circumstances. Penalties that may be imposed range from a warning, a suspended sentence, work training, to imprisonment. However, imprisonment for children is limited to a maximum of half the maximum sentence applicable to adult offenders. Furthermore, judges are granted the authority to impose measures of an educational and rehabilitative nature, such as returning the child to their parents or guardians, an obligation to attend education or training, and care in social or medical rehabilitation institutions. These provisions demonstrate that the state prioritises rehabilitation over punishment for children who commit criminal offences.

Building Legal Awareness among Indonesian Adolescents in accordance with Law No. 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code: A Study by the Islamic Centre Foundation

In light of the rising crime rates in Indonesia, particularly in North Sumatra Province, the situation is further exacerbated by the fact that crime is predominantly committed by young people (adolescents). This

indicates that Indonesia is facing a social crisis that must be addressed as early as possible. This is because the nation's young people are the cornerstone of the nation's future.

The high crime rate, caused by the public's lack of legal awareness, indicates that the problems stem from the most fundamental level. This fundamental level relates to culture and tradition. Consequently, the essence of culture which encompasses noble values or 'living law' plays a vital role in shaping the mindset of a nation. This is also what Friedrich Carl von Savigny put forward in his theory known as the 'historical school of law'. According to him, law is not created, but rather arises naturally alongside society itself.

It is therefore necessary to examine the context within the theory of legal systems and the theory put forward by Friedrich Carl von Savigny, which emphasises the aspect of law that is alive within society. In his view, good law is law that lives and evolves alongside society. His school of thought the Historical School of Law is the legal school developed by Savigny. Law is a manifestation of the 'volksgeist', the spirit of the nation. His teachings hold that law is not created but arises alongside society. This is what is referred to as 'living law'. Through this, the new Criminal Code represents a concept that reflects the values of Indonesian identity in an excellent and transformative manner. Consequently, this aspect of empowering 'living law' is considered highly appropriate for countering the various factors that lead to non-compliance with the law. The empowerment of 'living law' within positive law is deemed capable of increasing public participation in complying with the law and instilling a sense of shame when the law itself is breached.

The Community Service event, organised by the Master's Programme in Law at the Faculty of Law, University of North Sumatra, at the North Sumatra Islamic Centre Foundation, highlighted many key points regarding the development of legal awareness amongst young people. In their addresses, the speakers who are experts in criminal law and lecturers from the Faculty of Law, University of North Sumatra explained that the Criminal Code reflects Indonesian culture and stated that the prevailing philosophy in Indonesia is communal and religious. Consequently, several provisions in the 2023 Criminal Code have a religious undertone and reflect social morality and ethics.[13], hlm. 1-2 Consequently, the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP) still contains a provision on cohabitation, also known as 'kumpul kebo'. This is set out in Article 412(1) of the National Criminal Code, which states that any person who lives together as husband and wife outside of marriage shall be liable to imprisonment for a maximum of 6 (six) months or a fine not exceeding Category II. Referring to Article 79(1)(b), the penalty for a Category II fine is Rp. 10,000,000.00 (ten million rupiah).

Cohabitation is not a criminal offence; it is an offence that requires a complaint to be filed.[14], hlm. 235 A complaint-based criminal offence is defined as a category of criminal offence that may only be prosecuted by law enforcement authorities upon receipt of a complaint or objection from parties authorised by law (the Criminal Code). This is emphasised in Article 412(2), which states that no prosecution shall be brought in respect of the criminal offences referred to in paragraph 1 except upon a complaint by a husband or wife in the case of a married couple, or by a parent or child in the case of an unmarried person. The criminal offence of cohabitation carries its own significance, namely the moral and religious values underlying it. Refraining from cohabitation is certainly a commendable act from a theological perspective, and when this is violated, it results in a form of misfortune or bad karma for the perpetrator and those around them. It is these values that are upheld, which is why the Criminal Code and the majority of Indonesia's positive law adhere to this principle.

The speaker also explained that the first crime to occur on earth was murder; historically, the first murder stemmed from the feud between Habil and Qabil, which resulted in Qabil's death due to his jealousy that his offering had not been accepted by God, whereas Habil's offering had been accepted. This provoked Cain's anger, leading him to immediately kill his brother, Abel. Consequently, the message being conveyed is the need for legal awareness and mutual understanding amongst people to prevent conflicts from arising.

This research also emphasises that the role of young people is, in fact, central to ensuring the effective enforcement of the law. As breaches of the law are among the evils on earth that God detests most, this study urges us to uphold and respect the supremacy of the law. The supremacy of the law means placing the law in the highest position, with nothing standing above it.

The National Criminal Code, which is now in force, represents positive law and the local wisdom of the archipelago's cultures. This is reflected in Article 2, Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the National Criminal Code, which provide scope for customary law or 'living law'. Article 2, Paragraph 1 explains that the provisions referred to in Article 1, Paragraph 1 (concerning the principle of legality) do not preclude the application of living law within a community which determines that a person is liable to criminal punishment even though the act in question is not regulated in this Act (the Criminal Code). Meanwhile, Article 2(2) stipulates that the living law within the community, as referred to in paragraph 1, applies in the places where that law is practised and insofar as it is not regulated in this Act (the Criminal Code), and in accordance with the values enshrined in Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, human rights, and the general principles of law recognised by the international community.

Customary law, which has long been rooted as 'living law' in various communities, serves as a vital instrument in shaping a more contextual national legal framework. This integration enables the judicial system to accommodate the local wisdom that predominates in dispute resolution, whilst also serving as the basis for the development of new criminal law that is more widely accepted by the general public. Furthermore, comparative law with customary legal systems which communities regard as 'living law' has proven effective as a tool for criminal law reform, enabling regulations to be adapted to current social dynamics. The utilisation of this mechanism, as reflected in community-based dispute resolution practices, demonstrates that customary structures are capable of functioning as a more humane form of mediation in mitigating the impact of criminal sanctions. The presence of these customary norms is consistent with efforts to reconceptualise criminal law, which not only emphasises retributive aspects but also takes into account the sociological values of the local community.

The integration of customary law into the national legal system in Indonesia has reflected a progressive pattern of accommodation, in which local norms play a significant role in maintaining social stability. The strengthening of this role is evident in the efforts of stakeholders who are actively designing adaptive legal mechanisms to reconcile the dichotomy between traditional norms and state legality. The practical implications of this phenomenon are evident in the successful resolution of various community-based disputes through a consultative approach, which has effectively reduced recidivism rates compared to conventional litigation processes. Furthermore, this study found that recognition of 'urf' or traditions embodying Islamic values as practised within certain communities is a key element in strengthening the legitimacy of the law at the grassroots level. This process reflects the state's recognition of legal pluralism, whereby authorities must continue to take into account the diversity of values of justice held by a multicultural society in every legal decision-making process. Furthermore, this pattern of syncretism underscores that the effectiveness of the national legal system is no longer determined solely by formal recognition, but by the legal consciousness of a society that seeks the application of rules based on local needs and the principles of Sharia. As reflected in the historical record of law in Cirebon, the synergy between Islamic law, customary law and elements of Western law has proven capable of creating a harmonious and sustainable system of justice.

Effective efforts to raise young people's legal awareness in social life and amidst digital developments can be achieved through ongoing legal education, whether within the family, at school, or in the wider community. Legal education should not only focus on familiarising young people with legislation, but also instil an understanding of their rights and obligations as citizens, the importance of obeying the law, and

the legal consequences of their actions. Through contextual learning that is in step with the times, young people can understand that the law serves as a guide in maintaining order, justice and the protection of the rights of both individuals and society.

In the digital age, raising legal awareness can be achieved through adequate digital literacy. Young people need to be educated on social media ethics, the protection of personal data, intellectual property rights, and the various legal provisions governing activities in the digital sphere. This is important given that the development of information technology has given rise to various forms of legal violations, such as the spread of hoaxes, hate speech, defamation, cyberbullying, online fraud, and privacy breaches. By understanding the risks and legal consequences that may arise from digital activities, the younger generation will be wiser and more responsible in their use of technology. During this community service initiative, the team of speakers urged both pupils and teachers to work hand in hand to build a better legal culture. This is particularly important for pupils who will eventually enter the workforce after completing their upper secondary education (SLTA) and progressing to higher education. The team urged the students to become agents of change and pioneers in the upholding of the rule of law. They were encouraged to become good public servants, embodying the spirit of national service in a broad sense. National service can be practised in simple ways; for instance, carrying out one's professional duties and utilising one's expertise within the appropriate framework with sincerity and dedication is a manifestation of national service in its simplest form.[15], hlm. 4-5

Furthermore, the role of the government, educational institutions, youth organisations and the mass media is crucial in organising legal education programmes that are engaging and easy for the younger generation to understand. The use of social media, webinars, podcasts, digital campaigns and legal case simulations can serve as effective tools for improving legal understanding. These activities not only impart knowledge but also encourage young people's active participation in fostering a culture of legal awareness within their local communities. With increased legal awareness in both social and digital spheres, young people are expected to adopt a critical mindset, act responsibly, and respect the rights of others in all their interactions. A strong sense of legal awareness will shape a younger generation that is law-abiding, possesses integrity, and is able to utilise technological developments positively and productively to support the creation of an orderly, safe and just society.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this discussion, it can be concluded that the status of young people under criminal law following the entry into force of Law No. 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code reflects a paradigm shift towards a more humanistic approach, focused on the protection and guidance of the younger generation. The National Criminal Code not only treats young people as legal subjects who bear responsibility for their actions, but also takes into account their psychological and social development, as well as their future, through an approach that prioritises restorative justice, rehabilitation and social reintegration. On the other hand, young people's understanding of the substance and changes to the norms within the National Criminal Code still needs to be strengthened through ongoing legal education and awareness-raising. Low levels of legal literacy have the potential to lead to misunderstandings regarding rights, obligations and the legal consequences of various actions, both in social life and in the increasingly developed digital space. The constructive recommendation arising from this research is that the government and relevant agencies should establish cooperation with legal practitioners and academics from various universities across Indonesia to enhance outreach and education regarding the substance and changes to the provisions in Law No. 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code among young people in a more intensive and sustainable manner. Such awareness-raising should be carried out through various media that are easily accessible to the

younger generation, whether through legal education programmes in schools and higher education institutions or via digital platforms and social media. Furthermore, the implementation of policies relating to young people in conflict with the law must continue to prioritise an approach based on protection, guidance and restorative justice in order to achieve the objectives of criminal sanctions that are more oriented towards behavioural rehabilitation and social reintegration.

Furthermore, raising legal awareness amongst young people can be achieved through adaptive legal education, strengthening digital literacy, participatory legal education, and the active involvement of various stakeholders, including families, schools, the government and youth organisations. These efforts must be directed towards fostering attitudes and behaviours that are in line with legal values, so that the younger generation is able to act responsibly, respect the rights of others, and uphold legal norms in community life. Furthermore, educational institutions, youth organisations, and the wider community are expected to play an active role in improving the legal and digital literacy of the younger generation. Legal education is not only aimed at understanding legislation, but also at fostering character, ethics and social responsibility in both daily life and the digital sphere. Through the strengthening of character education and legal awareness, young people are expected to develop attitudes that are in line with prevailing legal values, to respect the rights of others, and to avoid various forms of legal violations that could harm themselves or society.

Furthermore, young people need to be encouraged to act as active agents of change in fostering a culture of legal awareness through various educational and social activities in their local communities. These efforts are in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which emphasises the importance of fostering peaceful societies, ensuring access to justice, and strengthening effective, accountable and inclusive institutions. As the younger generation's legal awareness and participation increase, a strong foundation will be laid for the development of an orderly, just and sustainable society. Furthermore, young people need to be encouraged to take a more active role as agents of change in fostering a culture of legal awareness within the community. The involvement of the younger generation in educational activities, legal campaigns, social organisations, and the positive use of digital media can serve as effective means of fostering legal compliance and strengthening community participation in maintaining social order. These efforts will ultimately support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, namely to foster peaceful societies, ensure access to justice, and strengthen effective, accountable and inclusive institutions for sustainable development.

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