

Legal Protection of Children and Juvenile Crime Prevention in Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah Polytechnic

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Abstract

The protection of children and the prevention of juvenile crime are critical issues that demand comprehensive legal understanding and proactive measures, especially within academic environments. This study aims to examine the current legal framework, awareness, and practices related to child protection and juvenile crime prevention among the academic community of Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah Polytechnic. Using a qualitative research approach, data were collected through interviews, observation, and document analysis, focusing on students, faculty, and administrative staff. The findings indicate that while there is a basic understanding of children's rights and legal provisions, gaps exist in the implementation and enforcement of preventive measures. The study highlights the need for structured legal literacy programs, strict adherence to national regulations on child protection, and the development of institutional policies to effectively prevent juvenile delinquency. Strengthening legal knowledge and proactive engagement is essential to safeguard children's welfare and foster a safe academic environment.

Keywords: Child Protection, Juvenile Crime, Legal Literacy, Academic Community

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Introduction

Children are among the most vulnerable members of society and require special attention and protection under the law. Ensuring their safety, rights, and well-being is not only a moral responsibility but also a legal obligation enforced through national and international regulations. In recent years, issues related to juvenile delinquency and child victimization have become increasingly prominent, highlighting the need for proactive legal measures and awareness within communities, including academic institutions.

Academic environments, such as polytechnics, play a significant role in shaping the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of young people. As such, universities and polytechnics bear a responsibility to provide not only education but also a safe environment that safeguards children from potential harm and prevents juvenile offenses. Legal protection mechanisms, combined with awareness programs, are essential to prevent child abuse, exploitation, and involvement in criminal activities.

Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah Polytechnic, as a prominent educational institution, represents a microcosm of society where legal literacy and preventive measures regarding child protection can be effectively implemented. Despite the existence of national laws and regulations governing child protection and juvenile justice, challenges remain in ensuring their full understanding and practical application among students, faculty, and administrative staff.

This study aims to examine the current state of legal protection and preventive measures against juvenile crime within the academic community of Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah Polytechnic. By exploring legal awareness, institutional policies, and community practices, the research seeks to provide insights and recommendations for strengthening child protection and promoting a safer academic environment.

Literature Review

2.1 Legal Framework for Child Protection

The protection of children is enshrined in both international and national legal frameworks, providing the foundation for legal literacy and preventive measures against juvenile crime. Internationally, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) serves as a pivotal instrument, obliging state parties to ensure children's rights to protection, education, health, and development. Articles 19 and 34 of the UNCRC explicitly address the prevention of all forms of physical or mental violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Scholars such as Hadjon (n.d.) argue that these international provisions require

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effective implementation at the national and community levels, emphasizing the role of legal literacy and institutional policies.

In Indonesia, child protection is regulated under Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, which mandates government, community, and family participation in safeguarding children. Complementing this, Law No. 11 of 2012 on the Juvenile Justice System sets the legal framework for dealing with children who commit offenses, focusing on restorative justice rather than punitive measures. This law prioritizes rehabilitation, education, and reintegration into society. According to (Fikri, Siregar & Akbar, 2023), the effectiveness of these legal frameworks largely depends on their awareness and implementation, especially in environments with vulnerable populations such as academic institutions.

2.2 Legal Literacy and Awareness in Academic Communities

Legal literacy refers to the knowledge, understanding, and application of legal norms, enabling individuals to recognize their rights and obligations and act to prevent violations. Fitzgerald (n.d.) emphasizes that legal literacy is essential for promoting compliance with laws and fostering a law-abiding culture.

Academic communities, including students, faculty, and administrative staff, play a critical role in implementing and promoting legal protection measures. Studies indicate that low legal literacy can lead to gaps in child protection, where violations may go unrecognized or unreported (Fatmawati, Fikri, Siregar & Mawarni, 2023). Conversely, increased legal literacy through structured programs—such as workshops, seminars, and integration of legal topics into curricula—has been shown to improve awareness, prevent juvenile crime, and foster a safer institutional environment (Aspan, Indrawan & Wahyuni, 2021; Fikri, Siregar, Rafianti & Mawarni, 2022).

2.3 Juvenile Crime and Prevention Strategies

Juvenile delinquency is influenced by family, peer, and institutional factors. Legal scholars and criminologists highlight the importance of preventive strategies that combine law enforcement, social support, education, and restorative approaches (Fikri, Siregar & Akbar, 2023).

In academic settings, the role of prevention is particularly significant because educational institutions shape the values and behavior of young people. Restorative justice programs and diversion methods have been implemented in Indonesia as part of the juvenile justice system, emphasizing rehabilitation over punishment. Fikri (2020; 2022) and colleagues note that such

Rahul Ardian Fikri, Irma Fatmawati, Moses Elias Perangin-Angin approaches reduce the risk of reoffending, promote accountability, and provide victims with opportunities for participation in the justice process. Integrating these approaches into the academic context can help mitigate juvenile delinquency while fostering legal awareness and responsibility.

2.4 Institutional Policies and Practices

Effective institutional policies translate legal frameworks into concrete actions. These include codes of conduct, reporting mechanisms, legal awareness programs, and disciplinary procedures. Fitzgerald (n.d.) and Hadjon (n.d.) argue that formal regulations alone are insufficient unless accompanied by proactive implementation and community engagement.

In polytechnic environments, institutions must ensure that both students and staff understand the legal provisions related to child protection and juvenile crime. The literature highlights successful strategies such as the integration of restorative justice principles into institutional policies, structured legal literacy programs, and collaboration with legal authorities for monitoring and intervention (Fikri, Siregar, Rambe & Syaharani, 2024; Fatmawati, Fikri, Siregar & Mawarni, 2023). Studies show that these strategies not only reduce juvenile crime but also strengthen compliance with national legal standards.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore legal literacy, institutional policies, and preventive measures against juvenile crime within the academic community of Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah Polytechnic. Conducted over three months, the research involved purposive sampling of students, faculty, and administrative staff who are knowledgeable about child protection and juvenile justice. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document analysis of institutional regulations, codes of conduct, and legal guidelines. The study focused on three main variables: legal literacy, institutional policies, and preventive measures, examining awareness of relevant laws, implementation of regulations, and actions taken to prevent juvenile offenses. Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, including coding, theme identification, interpretation, and triangulation to ensure validity and reliability. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and adherence to institutional rules, were strictly observed throughout the research process.

3.1 Research Approach

The research approach of this study is qualitative and descriptive-analytical, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of legal literacy, child protection, and juvenile crime prevention within the academic community of Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah Polytechnic. This approach emphasizes in-depth exploration of perceptions, knowledge, and practices of students, faculty, and administrative staff regarding the implementation of relevant laws, institutional policies, and preventive measures. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis, allowing the researcher to capture both formal regulations and practical applications. The approach also incorporates triangulation to validate findings by comparing insights from different data sources, ensuring the reliability of the results. By using this approach, the study seeks not only to describe the current state of legal awareness and preventive practices but also to analyze the effectiveness and challenges of applying child protection and juvenile justice measures in an academic setting.

3.2 Research Location and Subjects

The research was conducted at Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah Polytechnic, Malaysia, during August 2025. The study focused on the academic community, including students, faculty members, and administrative staff, selected through purposive sampling to ensure that participants had relevant knowledge or experience related to child protection and juvenile crime prevention. This diverse group of respondents provided comprehensive insights into the awareness, implementation, and effectiveness of legal measures and institutional policies aimed at safeguarding children and preventing juvenile offenses within the polytechnic environment.

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using multiple qualitative methods to ensure depth and validity of the findings. These included semi-structured interviews with students, faculty, and administrative staff to explore their knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding child protection and juvenile crime prevention; direct observations of institutional activities, student interactions, and preventive programs to assess practical implementation; and document analysis of institutional regulations, codes of conduct, workshop materials, and legal guidelines to evaluate the formal frameworks supporting child protection and juvenile justice. The combination of these techniques allowed for triangulation of data, enhancing the reliability and comprehensiveness of the study.

3.4 Data Analysis Methods

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, focusing on identifying patterns, themes, and insights related to legal literacy, institutional policies, and juvenile crime prevention. The analysis process involved coding the interview transcripts, observation notes, and institutional documents; identifying recurring themes such as awareness of laws, effectiveness of preventive measures, and gaps in implementation; interpreting the findings in relation to existing literature and legal frameworks; and triangulating data from multiple sources to ensure validity and reliability. This approach allowed the researcher to comprehensively understand both the formal and practical aspects of child protection and juvenile justice within the academic community of Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah Polytechnic.

Results 4.1 Understanding of Child Protection Laws and Juvenile Justice System among the Academic Community

The findings indicate that the academic community of Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah Polytechnic has a moderate level of understanding regarding child protection laws and the juvenile justice system. Most students, faculty, and administrative staff were aware of the existence of Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection and Law No. 11 of 2012 on the Juvenile Justice System, particularly the principles of restorative justice and diversion programs. Interviews revealed that faculty members were generally more knowledgeable than students, often citing specific provisions related to child protection and legal procedures for handling juvenile offenders.

However, while theoretical awareness is present, practical understanding and application remain limited. Many respondents admitted uncertainty about the proper steps to report incidents or implement preventive measures. Students expressed familiarity with basic concepts such as children's rights and the need for rehabilitation for juvenile offenders, but few could explain detailed legal procedures or the role of diversion programs in practice. Administrative staff demonstrated awareness of institutional policies but acknowledged that training and capacity-building programs on child protection and juvenile justice were infrequent and insufficient.

Overall, the results suggest that legal literacy exists at a conceptual level but needs reinforcement through structured programs, continuous training, and practical guidance to ensure that the academic community can effectively apply legal knowledge in preventing juvenile crime and safeguarding children within the polytechnic environment. This finding aligns with prior research emphasizing that awareness alone is insufficient without active implementation and institutional support (Fikri, 2020; Fatmawati et al., 2023).

4.2 Institutional Policies and Mechanisms for Child Protection and Juvenile Crime Prevention

The study found that Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah Polytechnic has established several institutional policies and mechanisms aimed at protecting children and preventing juvenile crime within the academic community. These include codes of conduct, reporting procedures, and guidelines for handling cases involving children and juveniles. Administrative staff reported that these regulations are designed to ensure compliance with national child protection laws and to provide a framework for addressing incidents of misconduct or delinquency among students.

In practice, the polytechnic has implemented preventive programs, such as occasional workshops on legal literacy, seminars on children's rights, and awareness campaigns targeting both students and faculty. Observations indicated that the institution emphasizes the importance of proactive monitoring of student behavior, encouraging faculty and staff to identify early signs of potential issues and intervene appropriately. Some departments also have mentoring and counseling systems, offering guidance to students who may be at risk of engaging in delinquent behavior.

However, the results reveal that while these policies exist, their implementation is inconsistent. Several respondents noted that enforcement is often reactive rather than proactive, with procedures being followed only when an incident occurs. Additionally, there is a lack of comprehensive training for staff and students, resulting in limited understanding of how to apply the policies effectively. The absence of systematic evaluation and monitoring mechanisms further reduces the effectiveness of these institutional measures.

Overall, the polytechnic has a formal framework for child protection and juvenile crime prevention, but challenges in implementation, awareness, and monitoring suggest a need for strengthening institutional mechanisms. Enhancing training programs, ensuring consistent enforcement, and integrating preventive policies into daily academic activities are essential to make these mechanisms more effective in safeguarding children and preventing juvenile offenses (Fikri, Siregar, Rambe & Syaharani, 2024; Fatmawati et al., 2023).

4.3 Effectiveness of Restorative Justice and Diversion Methods in Preventing Juvenile Crime

The findings indicate that the application of restorative justice and diversion methods within Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah Polytechnic is present but limited in scope and effectiveness.

Faculty and administrative staff demonstrated awareness of restorative approaches, recognizing their value in addressing juvenile offenses through rehabilitation, reconciliation, and education, rather than punitive measures. Several respondents noted that restorative justice programs, when implemented, helped juveniles understand the impact of their actions, encouraged accountability, and facilitated mediation between offenders and victims.

However, the practical implementation of these methods is inconsistent and not fully institutionalized. Many respondents reported that diversion programs are rarely applied at the polytechnic level due to limited resources, lack of formal protocols, and insufficient training for staff. Students involved in incidents of misconduct often receive counseling or guidance, but structured diversion mechanisms, such as formal agreements or community service programs, are sporadic and dependent on individual staff initiative.

Interviews also revealed that while the academic community appreciates the theoretical benefits of restorative justice, challenges such as unclear procedures, limited awareness among students, and minimal monitoring reduce its effectiveness in preventing repeat offenses. Observations confirmed that most restorative interventions are ad-hoc, and there is no standardized framework integrated into the polytechnic's policies.

Overall, the study suggests that while restorative justice and diversion methods have potential to effectively prevent juvenile delinquency, their success depends on systematic implementation, staff training, and integration into institutional policy. Strengthening these aspects could improve preventive outcomes, reduce recidivism, and foster a supportive academic environment that aligns with both national juvenile justice laws and best practices in child protection (Fikri, 2020; Fikri, Siregar, Rafianti & Mawarni, 2022; Fikri, Siregar & Akbar, 2023).

4.4 Challenges and Obstacles in Implementing Child Protection and Juvenile Crime Prevention

The study identified several challenges and obstacles faced by the academic community of Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah Polytechnic in implementing child protection and preventing juvenile crime. First, there is a limited understanding of detailed legal procedures among students and some staff members. While general awareness of Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection and Law No. 11 of 2012 on the Juvenile Justice System exists, practical knowledge regarding reporting mechanisms, intervention steps, and diversion processes is often insufficient. This gap in legal literacy reduces the ability of the community to respond effectively to potential incidents.

Second, institutional support and resources are inadequate. Respondents reported that formal training programs, workshops, and structured awareness campaigns are infrequent, and monitoring systems for preventive measures are underdeveloped. The absence of consistent guidelines and clear procedural frameworks leads to ad-hoc responses when cases arise, which can compromise both child protection and the effectiveness of restorative interventions.

Third, cultural and behavioral factors within the academic environment pose challenges. Some students and staff may hesitate to report incidents due to fear of social stigma, lack of confidence in institutional procedures, or reluctance to involve external authorities. This limits early detection and intervention, which are critical for preventing escalation of juvenile delinquency.

Finally, coordination with external legal and child protection agencies is limited. While collaboration with local authorities can enhance preventive efforts and provide additional support for juveniles, respondents indicated that such partnerships are not systematically established, reducing the effectiveness of interventions beyond the institutional level.

Overall, the results highlight that while the academic community recognizes the importance of child protection and juvenile crime prevention, gaps in knowledge, resources, institutional enforcement, and external collaboration remain major obstacles. Addressing these challenges through comprehensive legal literacy programs, improved institutional policies, staff training, and stronger partnerships with external agencies is essential to enhance the effectiveness of preventive measures and safeguard children within the polytechnic environment (Fikri, 2020; Fikri, Siregar, Rambe & Syaharani, 2024; Fatmawati et al., 2023).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the academic community of Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah Polytechnic demonstrates a moderate level of awareness regarding child protection laws and the juvenile justice system, including restorative justice and diversion programs. While legal literacy exists conceptually, the practical application of laws and preventive measures remains limited, particularly due to gaps in institutional policies, monitoring mechanisms, and structured training programs.

The polytechnic has established several institutional policies and preventive mechanisms, such as codes of conduct, reporting procedures, and occasional workshops, but these are often inconsistently implemented and lack formalized frameworks for systematic application. Restorative justice and diversion methods are recognized for their potential to prevent juvenile delinquency, yet their implementation is sporadic and dependent on individual initiative, reducing overall effectiveness.

Challenges such as limited knowledge of detailed legal procedures, inadequate institutional support, resource constraints, cultural and behavioral factors, and minimal coordination with external agencies hinder the effectiveness of child protection and juvenile crime prevention efforts. These obstacles highlight the need for a more proactive, comprehensive, and structured approach.

In conclusion, enhancing legal literacy, institutional enforcement, staff training, and collaboration with external authorities is essential to strengthen child protection and prevent juvenile crime within the polytechnic environment. A systematic and integrated approach will not only improve compliance with national laws but also foster a safe, supportive, and lawabiding academic community.

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