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Street Violence by Youths (Klitih) in Magelang: A Criminal Law and Criminological Review

Arya Bima Damar Aji[1], Basri[2], Yulia Kurniaty[3], Johny Krisnan[4*]

[1] Universitas Muhammadiyah Magelang, Magelang, Indonesia
[2] Universitas Muhammadiyah Magelang, Magelang, Indonesia
[3] Universitas Muhammadiyah Magelang, Magelang, Indonesia
[4] Universitas Muhammadiyah Magelang, Magelang, Indonesia
[*]Corresponding author: Johny Krisnan, Universitas Muhammadiyah Magelang

Abstract

Klitih, random street violence mostly committed by teenagers, has been reported in Magelang and weakens residents' sense of safety outdoors, yet its legal treatment is rarely analysed as a set of offences. This article asks how criminal law and criminology explain klitih and how it should be handled, with attention to child offenders. It is normative legal research using the statute approach and a conceptual approach based on criminological theory, applied to statutes, Supreme Court regulations, the literature and press reports of incidents, analysed descriptively and qualitatively. No judicial decision could be analysed in full. The article finds that klitih is not a separate offence: depending on the facts it is charged as assault, murder, group violence or possession of a sharp weapon. Its provisions have moved from the old Criminal Code to Law No 1 of 2023, in force since 2 January 2026. Where the offender is a child, Law No 11 of 2012 requires diversion for offences below seven years and treats imprisonment as a last resort, which limits the call for heavy sanctions. Criminologically, klitih is best explained as a group subculture shaped by weak social control. The article recommends prosecution proportionate to the conduct, restorative handling of child offenders, and prevention through schools, families, police patrols and collection of local data.

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Keywords

Klitih; Criminology; Delinquency; Juvenile; Violence; Magelang

Introduction

People meet crime directly or through the stories of others and the media, and religious thinkers distinguish natural evil from moral evil. Crime violates social norms and is a social problem because offenders and victims come from the same

community. It is worrying when its number grows, and it can be seen not only as a product of social, economic, environmental and educational factors but also as a way of expressing individual or group identity.[1234]

One form of violence committed openly in Yogyakarta and nearby is called klitih. Its perpetrators are mostly young people in junior and senior high school, and it provokes public reaction because it unsettles society and victims may be several people. Most perpetrators choose victims at random and, when caught, say that they acted 'for fun', which cannot be accepted as a rational justification. Offenders who are minors follow the juvenile court process.[56]

Klitih is best documented in Yogyakarta, and this article studies Magelang for a practical reason: the phenomenon is reported there as well, and Magelang has received little attention. The Magelang evidence is a press report of an incident in March 2023 in Mertoyudan, where, according to the driver involved, two teenagers on a motorbike chased a woman motorcyclist with a sickle and he rammed their bike; the relatives of one teenager disputed this, and police detained the two.[78] That is one reported incident, not a trend. The article has no police statistics for Magelang, so it does not claim that klitih is increasing there, and it uses the Magelang incident to show that the questions are pertinent, not to measure the phenomenon.

Earlier studies have mostly come from Yogyakarta and mostly take the form of student theses. Harahap and Sulhin approach the control of the klitih gang subculture through cultural criminology;[9] Hidayat examines police handling of klitih offenders in the Special Region of Yogyakarta;[10] Pratama studies law enforcement against klitih violence at the Bantul District Prosecutor's Office;[11] and Rohadi reviews the legal system's response to klitih among students in Kotagede.[12] These works address either the subculture or the enforcement practice in

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[1] E H Nassaruddin, *Kriminologi* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2018).

[2] Topo Santoso & Eva Achjani Zulfa, *Kriminologi* (Jakarta: Rajawali, 2017).

[3] C B Harahap & I Sulhin, "Pengendalian Kejahatan pada Sub-Kebudayaan Gang Klitih (dalam Paradigma Kriminologi Budaya)" (2022) 6:1 *Deviance Jurnal Kriminologi* 86, DOI: <10.36080/djk.v6i1.1569>.

[4] A Hidayat, *Proses Hukum Kepolisian dalam Menindaklanjuti Pelaku Tindak Pidana Kekerasan Klitih di Yogyakarta (Studi Kasus Kepolisian Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta)* (Thesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2019).

[5] Harahap & Sulhin, *supra* note 3.

[6] Law No 11 of 2012 on the Juvenile Criminal Justice System (Indonesia).

[7] "Klitih Kejar Ibu-ibu Pakai Celurit Berujung Ditabrak Mobil di Magelang" *CNN Indonesia* (2023).

[8] "Aksi Remaja Bercelurit Bacok Kap Mobil di Magelang Berujung Jeruji Besi" *detikJateng* (2023).

[9] Harahap & Sulhin, *supra* note 3.

[10] Hidayat, *supra* note 4.

[11] D W Pratama, *Penegakan Hukum terhadap Tindak Pidana Kekerasan (Klitih) (Studi Kasus di Kejaksaan Negeri Bantul)* (Thesis, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2022).

[12] I Rohadi, *Tinjauan Sistem Hukum dalam Penanggulangan Klitih oleh Pelajar di Kota Gede* (Thesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2019).

Yogyakarta. This article adds three things: it sets out which offences klitih conduct engages and how the elements apply, under both the old Criminal Code and the new one; it tests the call for heavy sanctions against the principles of the juvenile justice law; and it ties a stated criminological theory to prevention measures, taking Magelang as its setting.

The article therefore asks two questions: (1) which criminal law provisions apply to klitih, and how are child offenders dealt with under the Juvenile Criminal Justice System Act; and (2) how does criminology explain klitih and which preventive measures does the explanation support? Its purpose is to answer these questions and to propose a response that deters violence without departing from the protection of children.

Research Method

This is normative (doctrinal) legal research. It uses a statute approach and a conceptual approach based on criminological theory. The legal materials are primary and secondary. The primary materials are the Criminal Code, Law No 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code, Law No 20 of 2025 on the Code of Criminal Procedure, Law No 11 of 2012 on the Juvenile Criminal Justice System, Law No 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, Emergency Law No 12 of 1951 and Supreme Court Regulation No 2 of 2012.[13][14][15][16][17][18][19] The secondary materials are criminology textbooks, a journal article, student theses and press reports. The analysis is descriptive and qualitative: it identifies the elements of each offence, applies them to the typical conduct in klitih, and uses criminological theory to explain the conduct.

No case approach is used. No judicial decision on klitih was available in full text with court, number and date, so no decision is analysed as a source of reasoning. One judgment on a klitih killing in Yogyakarta is therefore used only as an illustration, as reported in the press. Nor did the research collect interviews or field data in Magelang.

Results and Discussion

[13] Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana (Criminal Code) (Indonesia), enacted by Law No 1 of 1946.
[14] Law No 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code (Indonesia).
[15] Law No 20 of 2025 on the Code of Criminal Procedure (Indonesia).
[16] Law No 11 of 2012, *supra* note 6.
[17] Law No 35 of 2014 amending Law No 23 of 2002 on Child Protection (Indonesia).
[18] Emergency Law No 12 of 1951 amending Ordonnantie Tijdelijke Bijzondere Strafbepalingen (Indonesia).
[19] Supreme Court Regulation No 2 of 2012 on the Adjustment of the Limits of Minor Crimes and the Amount of Fines in the Criminal Code (Indonesia).

Klitih in Criminal Law

The causes of juvenile crime are usually divided into internal and external factors. Writers point to the pace of the age, globalisation of information and communication, technological progress, parents' lifestyle, misuse of social media and deviance in peer groups.[20] Klitih with violence is unlawful, and if it causes death it is a serious crime. Because klitih is a label for conduct and not an offence in the Criminal Code, the charge depends on what was done and with what intent, and the first question is whether the offender acted intentionally.

The Criminal Code that applied to conduct before 2 January 2026 offers several routes. Ordinary assault under article 351 carries up to two years and eight months, five years if there is serious injury and seven years if death results; minor assault under article 352 carries up to three months; planned assault under article 353 carries four, seven and nine years on the same scale; and serious assault under article 354 carries up to eight years, or ten if death results.[21] The fines in these articles are nominal (IDR 4,500 in article 351 and IDR 300 in article 352); Supreme Court Regulation No 2 of 2012 multiplied the fines of the Code by a thousand, so that they now stand at IDR 4.5 million and IDR 300,000.[22] Where the offender killed the victim intentionally, murder under article 338 applies (up to fifteen years), and planned murder under article 340 where the act was premeditated.

Two further offences matter because klitih is typically committed by groups with weapons. Violence together against persons or property under article 170 carries up to five years and six months, rising to twelve years when death results, and it is the provision that a court applied in the Gedongkuning case in Yogyakarta, in which, according to press reports, the Yogyakarta District Court sentenced three defendants to ten, six and six years on 8 November 2022 under article 170(2) for violence causing death.[2324] The case number is not available to the authors, so the report is used only to show that group violence causing death is a charge used in klitih killings. Carrying or possessing a sharp weapon without right is punishable under article 2(1) of Emergency Law No 12 of 1951 with up to ten years, and applies when a sickle or similar blade is carried, as in the Mertoyudan incident.[2526]

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[20] Pratama, *supra* note 11.
[21] Criminal Code, *supra* note 13.
[22] Supreme Court Regulation No 2 of 2012, *supra* note 19.
[23] Criminal Code, *supra* note 13.
[24] "3 Terdakwa Klithih Gedongkuning Jogja Divonis 6-10 Tahun Penjara" *detikJateng* (2022).
[25] Emergency Law No 12 of 1951, *supra* note 18.
[26] detikJateng, 2023, *supra* note 8.

The elements are proved in different ways. Intent is the main difficulty. A random victim shows that there was no personal grudge, but it does not show a lack of intent: riding out with a blade to look for someone to attack can support intent as a possibility, which can suffice for assault or murder, and a prior agreement or preparation (a decision, time to reflect and a calm execution) turns assault into planned assault under article 353. they are motives, not elements of the offence. Where several offenders attack together, article 170 spares the prosecutor the need to prove who struck the fatal blow.

The Criminal Code of 2023 (Law No 1 of 2023), in force since 2 January 2026, changes these provisions, as does the new Code of Criminal Procedure (Law No 20 of 2025), which governs the procedure.[27][28] Conduct committed before that date is judged under article 3 of Law No 1 of 2023: the new provision applies if the law changed after the act, unless the old one is more favourable to the defendant, so the choice between the codes has to be made case by case.[29] Table 1 sets out the main equivalents. Murder moves from article 338 to article 458 and planned murder from article 340 to article 459, and the new Code keeps the structure of assault, with article 466 for ordinary assault (up to seven years where death results) and article 467 for planned assault.[30] Serious assault, old article 354, becomes article 468, and open group violence, old article 170, becomes article 262 with the same graded penalties.[31] The fate of the Emergency Law provision on carrying sharp weapons under the new Code is not settled here, and the table therefore does not restate it.

Table 1. Offences engaged by klitih under the old and the new Criminal Code

Conduct	Criminal Code (before 2 January 2026)	Law No 1 of 2023
Ordinary assault	Art 351: 2 years 8 months; 5 years (serious injury); 7 years (death)	Art 466; up to 7 years where death results
Planned assault	Art 353: 4, 7 and 9 years	Art 467
Serious assault	Art 354: 8 years; 10 years (death)	Art 468: 8 years; 10 years (death)
Murder	Art 338: up to 15 years	Art 458
Planned murder	Art 340: death, life or up to 20 years	Art 459
Group violence	Art 170: up to 5 years 6 months; 12 years (death)	Art 262: 5 years or a fine; 9 years (serious injury); 12 years (death)
Sharp weapon	Emergency Law No 12 of 1951, art 2(1): up to 10 years	Not restated here; the Emergency Law's status under Law No 1 of 2023 should be confirmed before the offence is charged

Source: compiled by the authors from the legislation cited.

Child Offenders and the Juvenile Criminal Justice System

[27] Law No 1 of 2023, *supra* note 14.
[28] Law No 20 of 2025, *supra* note 15.
[29] Law No 1 of 2023, *supra* note 14, art 3.
[30] *Ibid*, arts 458, 459, 466(3), 467.
[31] *Ibid*, arts 262, 468.

Most klitih offenders are children, and Law No 11 of 2012 sets the framework. A child here is a person of at least 12 and under 18 years who is suspected of an offence, and a child under 14 may only be subjected to measures, not sentences.[32] Diversion is compulsory at every stage for offences punishable by less than seven years that are not repeated.[33] On the figures in Table 1, minor and ordinary assault without death and planned assault with no injury are within diversion, while assault causing death (seven years under article 351(3)), serious assault, murder and group violence causing death are not. Diversion is therefore not available for the most serious klitih cases, but it is the required first step in the many cases of lesser violence.

When a child is sentenced, imprisonment is a last resort, the sentence may not exceed half of the adult maximum, and a child who commits an offence punishable by death or life imprisonment may receive at most ten years.[34] The restriction-of-liberty sentence in article 79 has to be read in this setting. Article 79 provides that this sentence applies where a child commits a serious offence or an offence with violence, but it is one sanction among those listed in article 71, which also include a warning, a conditional sentence, job training and institutional guidance, and it is not the usual sentence for violent offences. The principles of the Act, the best interests of the child and imprisonment as the last resort, guide the choice among them.[35] Where the victim is also a child, the ban on violence against children in the Child Protection Law may apply alongside the Criminal Code.[36]

It follows that a call for sanctions heavy enough to deter is out of line with the Act for child offenders. Heavy penalties remain available in law for the worst cases, within the one-half and ten-year limits, but the Act directs prosecutors, judges and police to prefer diversion and measures that restore the child and the victim. For adult offenders the full range of the Code applies, and the proportionality of the sentence to the harm is the proper aim.

Klitih in Criminology

Klitih is commonly traced to Yogyakarta in the late 2000s, when groups of students rode motorcycles around the city looking for random ‘enemies’, usually other students. Popular accounts say that it began as a substitute for school brawls that the local government had banned; this article could not confirm that origin from the

[32] Law No 11 of 2012, *supra* note 6, art 69(2).
[33] *Ibid*, art 7.
[34] *Ibid*, art 81.
[35] *Ibid*, arts 71, 79.
[36] Law No 35 of 2014, *supra* note 17, art 76C.

sources available and does not rely on it. What the literature supports is that klitih became delinquency in the name of school gangs or youth groups attacking each other, which Harahap and Sulhin analyse as a gang subculture.[37]

Several theories explain why such conduct arises. Social control theory holds that young people offend when their bonds to family, school and community are weak; the lack of care by schools, parents and community fits this, and it supports guidance, supervision and religious education in the family. Differential association and subculture theories explain that the conduct is learnt in the peer group, where status comes from daring and belonging to a gang; they explain why klitih occurs in groups and why victims are random members of a rival or an anonymous other. Cultural criminology, which Harahap and Sulhin use, adds the thrill and the display of identity, which fits offenders' statement that they acted for fun.[38][39]

The theories lead to different preventive measures. Control theory points to families, schools and community supervision; subculture theory to breaking up the gang and offering legitimate sources of status, such as the chance to develop talents in sport, art or religion; and routine-activity reasoning, which looks at when and where opportunities arise, to police patrols at the times and places where groups ride at night, which the Magelang district and city police can organise as part of their duty to keep public order. The claim that films influence offenders has no source and is not relied on. The Kompas report on klitih that continues to claim victims, and the suspicion that the issue is deliberately magnified, is a reminder that public perception may exceed the facts, and that Magelang needs its own police and school data before any trend is claimed.[40]

Comparison with Earlier Research

The article agrees with Harahap and Sulhin that klitih is a group subculture and not only individual misconduct, and it draws the preventive consequence that control must reach the group and its sources of status.[41] Hidayat and Pratama examined how the police and the prosecutor handle klitih in Yogyakarta and Bantul;[42][43] the present article adds an analysis of which offence is charged for which conduct and of the limits that the juvenile justice law places on severity. Rohadi asked about the

[37] Harahap & Sulhin, *supra* note 3.
[38] Santoso & Zulfa, *supra* note 2.
[39] Harahap & Sulhin, *supra* note 3.
[40] Dzulfaroh, "Klitih yang Terus Memakan Korban dan Kecurigaan Isu yang Sengaja Dibesarkan" *Kompas.com* (2022).
[41] Harahap & Sulhin, *supra* note 3.
[42] Hidayat, *supra* note 4.
[43] Pratama, *supra* note 11.

legal system's response to klitih in Kotagede;[44] this article asks the same question for Magelang, but is limited by the absence of local data. It differs from these studies in treating the move to the Criminal Code of 2023 and the new Code of Criminal Procedure as part of the analysis, which the earlier studies, written before 2026, could not do.

Conclusion

On the first question, klitih is not an offence in itself. Assault, planned assault, serious assault, murder, group violence and the carrying of a sharp weapon are the provisions engaged, according to the injury, the intent and the number of offenders, and for conduct before 2 January 2026 the old or the new Criminal Code applies according to which is more favourable. Child offenders fall under Law No 11 of 2012: diversion is required for offences below seven years, imprisonment is a last resort, the sentence is at most half of the adult maximum, and the restriction-of-liberty sentence is one option among several. On the second question, criminology explains klitih as group subculture and delinquency growing from weak social control, and supports prevention through families, schools, community and police patrols, in preference to heavier sanctions.

Four recommendations follow. Prosecutors should charge the offence that matches the proved conduct and intent, using group violence and weapons provisions where individual acts cannot be attributed. Police and prosecutors should apply diversion and restorative measures to child offenders wherever the Act permits and reserve imprisonment for the gravest cases. Schools and families should be given a defined role in supervision and guidance, and talent programmes should be offered to young people at risk. The Magelang police and local government should collect and publish incident data so that the prevalence of klitih can be known. The study has limits: it rests on secondary sources, it analyses no judicial decision in full, it has no Magelang statistics, and the status of the Emergency Law provision on sharp weapons under the new Criminal Code is not settled.

Ethics and Data Availability

This normative legal research did not involve human participants or personal data, so ethical approval and informed consent were not required. No dataset was

[44] Rohadi, *supra* note 12.

generated; the legislation and the press reports cited are publicly available and are listed in the References.

Use of Generative AI

Generative AI was used only to improve the language of this article (grammar, clarity and style). The authors reviewed the output and are responsible for the content of the article.

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