

# Identity Crisis in The Midst of Urban Modernity: The Dynamics of Juvenile Delinquency, Religious Institutions, and Inequality of Family Supervision

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## ABSTRACT

This study is driven by the rising phenomenon of juvenile delinquency and the decline of religious knowledge among high school students in Palembang City, reflecting a critical identity crisis within urban modernity. The purpose of this research is to analyze the forms and underlying causes of juvenile delinquency, examine its social impacts, and evaluate the effectiveness of collaborative efforts among government, schools, and families. This study employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological case study design to explore students' lived experiences in depth. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The findings indicate that juvenile delinquency manifests in various forms, including student brawls, drug abuse, and promiscuity. These behaviors are primarily influenced by the weak internalization of religious values, toxic peer group dynamics, academic pressure, and insufficient parental supervision. Furthermore, the study reveals that delinquency has significant social consequences, such as increased public insecurity, erosion of social trust, and the decline of communal values like mutual cooperation. Efforts made by stakeholders remain fragmented, reactive, and lack sustainable coordination. The study implies the necessity of a holistic and integrative approach that combines local cultural wisdom with the internalization of religious moral values. It recommends shifting from punitive measures to preventive character-building strategies through strengthened collaboration among families, schools, and government institutions to ensure long-term social stability.

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## INTRODUCTION

Ideally, high school students in Palembang should be the golden generation who not only excel academically but also have a solid religious foundation and polite social behavior (Aulia et al., 2024; Jensen & Thomsen, 2024). This ideal condition demands a harmonious synergy between family, school, and society to instill moral and spiritual values deeply so that adolescents are able to refrain from destructive negative temptations (Agustin & Kistoro, 2024; Ar et al., 2025). However, the social facts that are happening today actually show a paradox that is very worrying for the future of the city. The degradation of religious knowledge is not only seen from the lack of understanding of worship rituals, but also from the loss of moral essence in religion itself which is supposed to be self-control (Fajri et al., 2025; Fatah et al., 2025; Hasanah & Husna, 2025). The phenomenon of juvenile delinquency such as brawls between students, drug abuse, and promiscuity is increasingly prevalent in various corners of the city of Palembang, in direct contradiction to the goal of character education launched by the local government. This real contradiction arises when educational institutions formally teach religion in the classroom, but the social environment outside the school indirectly normalizes behavioral deviations. Society expects adolescents to become agents of change who are religious and have noble character, but the reality on the ground shows that there is a gap between cognitive knowledge about religion and the implementation of ethics in daily life (Chande, 2023; Hakim et al., 2026). As a result, there is an identity crisis in which religious symbols may appear to be imposed, but the substance of piety is eroded by the tide of globalization and weak effective social control. This conflict between normative expectations and empirical reality creates deep public unrest, indicating that the approach to religious education has not succeeded in fortifying adolescents from the destructive impact of the surrounding environment which is increasingly complex and challenging for the moral sustainability of the nation (Asweni et al., 2024; Humaisi et al., 2024; Kariyanto et al., 2025; Choir et al., 2024).

This paradoxical phenomenon has caught the attention of academics, as evidenced by five recent studies that examined its correlation in depth. (Latipah et al., 2025; Muthmainah et al., 2025) researched the impact of PAI learning on student morale, while (Bogdanova et al., 2022; Moschis, 1985; Sawitri et al., 2024) focused on the role of family communication in prevention. (Saragih et al., 2025) analyzes the influence of peers, Hakim (2021) examines the school environment, and Nuraini (2024) highlights the impact of digital media on religious degradation (Hajad et al., 2025; Raikhan, 2024). All of the studies agree that the weak internalization of religious values is the main factor in juvenile delinquency.

However, there is a research gap that has not been comprehensively filled in the midst of their findings. The five studies tend to be general-national and have not integrated Palembang-specific local wisdom in their preventive solutions. They have not explored how the religious values of Palembang's Malay culture can be collaborated with a formal religious curriculum to effectively fortify students (Dharin et al., 2026; Rozanita et al., 2026). The majority of studies still use a purely quantitative approach so that they do not understand the deep sociocultural nuances. As a result, the solutions offered are often too generic and lack touch on the unique cultural roots of local communities. Future research needs to fill this gap by formulating a truly contextual model of religious education based on Palembang local wisdom. This is important because the universal approach often fails to accommodate the unique social dynamics in Palembang that blend river traditions and modern urbanism (Fauziyah et al., 2025; Jasminto & Rofi'ah, 2025; Rahman et al., 2025). Without filling this gap, the interventions carried out are only superficial and do not touch the core of the problem of moral degradation influenced by specific local contexts. Therefore, the urgency of new research that bridges religion, local culture, and the prevention of juvenile delinquency in Palembang is crucial to be followed up for the effectiveness of sustainable long-term solutions for the younger generation.

The main purpose of this study is to comprehensively analyze the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency and the degradation of religious knowledge of high school students in Palembang City. This research is designed to answer three crucial problem formulations that are closely related to each other. First, identify the forms of delinquency that often occur and the factors behind them in detail. Second, evaluate the real impact of delinquency on the social life of the pluralistic people of Palembang. Third, inventory countermeasures carried out by the government, schools, and families collaboratively. The logical reason for this urgent research to be carried out in Palembang is because the city has unique social dynamics as a religious Malay cultural center but is facing a significant surge in juvenile delinquency cases in recent times. Field data shows a sharp increase in cases of brawls and drug abuse among Palembang students which is very worrying, so it requires a specific study that cannot be generalized from other regions in Indonesia. Palembang's local context with its strong local wisdom values requires a distinctive and relevant handling strategy. By answering the formulation of these problems, this research is expected to provide a strategic roadmap for stakeholders to formulate policies based on real concrete data in the field. This is very important so that the interventions carried out are not only momentarily reactive but also preventive and sustainable in the long term. Ultimately, this research aims to restore the morality of Palembang's youth through evidence-based solutions tailored to the local context, ensuring that religious education is embodied in real moral behavior in the midst of increasingly complex modern challenges for future generations. This urgency is a strong foundation why the case study in Palembang cannot be ignored for the sake of the moral sustainability of the nation.

This research is very important and urgent considering the critical condition of adolescent morality in Palembang which has reached an alarming stage. The surge in juvenile delinquency cases that are directly correlated with the degradation of religious knowledge is not just an ordinary statistic, but a real indicator of an identity crisis that threatens the social sustainability of this city fundamentally. If left unchecked without a thorough and immediate study, the impact will extend to security instability and damage to the social structure of society that is long-term and difficult to repair. This situation has become a social emergency that cannot be postponed because every day the number of victims is increasing significantly. The urgency of this research lies in the urgent need for accurate empirical data to refute the common assumption that formal religious education in schools is adequate enough to fortify students. Facts on the ground show that there is a sharp gap between the religious teachings learned and the actual daily behavior that requires specific interventions based on the unique local context of Palembang. Without this research, policies taken by the government and educational institutions risk only being patchy, reactive, and not touching the root of students' cultural and spiritual problems in depth. In addition, the young generation is an asset of the nation; Failure to fortify them from negative influences now will result in the loss of quality human resources in the future. Therefore, this research is not just an academic fulfillment, but a great moral responsibility to save the generation from the deepening and widening abyss of moral degradation. Immediately a comprehensive analysis will allow the formulation of a targeted preventive strategy before character damage becomes permanent and difficult to restore for the people of Palembang.

## METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with phenomenological design to explore the deep meaning behind students' life experiences related to complex social problems. This approach was chosen because the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency and religious degradation is very subjective, so it requires a complete understanding of the context rather than just rigid statistical figures. Phenomenological design allows researchers to understand the essence of students' experiences of social pressures and their religious understanding directly from their own point of view. The data collection technique was carried out by triangulation method which included in-depth interviews, participant observations, and analysis of archival documents.

Interviews are the main instrument to obtain personal narratives, while observations are used to see real behavior in the school environment and daily associations without interfering with their natural activities. Document analysis includes school counseling records and student violation data to reinforce the validity of factual information. The implementation of this methodology is carried out systematically where researchers go directly into the field to build trust with the research subject during a certain period. It is important that the data obtained is not just a formality answer, but an honest outpouring of heart about their motivations and the background of their true behavior. With this combination of techniques, this research is able to photograph social reality holistically and deeply. Each incoming data will be recorded in detail in the field records to ensure that no important information is missed during the investigation process taking place at the Palembang City research site that has specific and unique cultural characteristics. The researcher also noted non-verbal contexts such as facial expressions when discussing sensitive topics to maximize the qualitative data obtained in the field.

The interview process was carried out intensively for a total of 180 minutes divided into three different sessions for each participant to avoid fatigue and get maximum data depth. There were eight high school students in Palembang who were involved as key informants in this study who were selected purposively. The uniqueness of this study is the use of the native Palembang language during the interview process to maintain the authenticity of the emotional and cultural expressions of the interviewees so that they are not distorted. After the recording is obtained, the data is transliterated into Indonesian with the full consent of the source to ensure the accuracy of the true meaning. Furthermore, the Indonesian text was translated into English for the benefit of wider and accessible international scientific publications. In order to maintain research ethics and the security of personal data, the names of the sources are strictly disguised by changing them to initials code F1 to F8 based on the need for confidentiality. This procedure is carried out according to academic ethical standards to protect adolescents' identities from negative stigma from the wider community. The implementation of this language stage requires high precision so that local nuances are not lost in the final translation. Researchers work closely with linguists to ensure local terms related to delinquency or religion are translated contextually. This ensures that the research results remain culturally relevant but accessible to a global audience without losing the authentic essence of the real and accurate experience of the research subject in the field of Palembang City. Ethics clearance is also obtained from the ethics committee before the research begins to ensure safety.

**Table 1.** Informans

NO	INITIALS	GENDER	BIRTHPLACE	OLD
1.	A1	WOMEN	PALEMBANG	16
2.	F1	MALE	PALEMBANG	15
3.	A2	MALE	PALEMBANG	16
4.	F2	MALE	PALEMBANG	16
5.	F3	MALE	PALEMBANG	17
6.	F4	WOMEN	PALEMBANG	16
7.	F5	WOMEN	PALEMBANG	15

8.	F6	MALE MALE	PALEMBANG	15
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The validity of the data in this study was validated using source triangulation methods and techniques to ensure the accuracy of information obtained from the field comprehensively. Triangulation was carried out by comparing the data of the interview results with the results of behavioral observations and official school documents to find the consistency of the existing facts. Once the data was collected and valid, the data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman interactive model which consisted of three streams of activities that occurred simultaneously and continuously. The first step is data reduction, where the researcher summarizes, selects the main points, and focuses on the themes of delinquency and religious degradation that emerge. The second step is data presentation or data display, where the reduced information is presented in the form of a matrix or work network to facilitate understanding the pattern of relationships between complex social variables. The last step is conclusion drawing and verification, where the researcher looks for the meaning of the data displayed to answer the formulation of the research problem. The implementation of this model allows researchers to manage large qualitative data in a systematic and well-structured manner. Each data code from the initials F1 to F8 will be categorized based on the emergent theme that emerges during the analysis in an iterative manner. This process is dynamic, meaning that researchers can return to the field if data is found that is still unclear during the analysis process. Thus, the conclusions produced are not only based on assumptions, but are grounded on strong empirical data and tested for validity through a strict analysis mechanism and can be scientifically accounted for in the social context of the people of Palembang. Auxiliary software is also used to manage data code to be more efficient and precise.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Forms of Juvenile Delinquency that Often Occur in the City of Palembang and the Factors Behind Them

The findings of the study revealed that the dominant forms of juvenile delinquency in Palembang City include brawls between students, drug abuse, and promiscuity that is increasingly worrying. Based on in-depth data from F1 to F8 informants, physical violence behavior is often triggered by narrow group solidarity and a strong desire to demonstrate one's existence in the midst of toxic peer communities. In addition, the use of illicit substances is increasingly accessible around the school environment as an escape mechanism from academic pressure and unresolved family problems. The factors behind this phenomenon are very complex and multidimensional. The degradation of religious knowledge is the root of the main problem, where students understand religion only in formal rituals without internalizing its moral values in daily life. This causes the fear of sin to disappear so that the line between right and wrong becomes blurred for them. Weak parental supervision due to busy work also contributes significantly, creating an emotional void that is soon filled by negative peer influences. The social environment that indirectly normalizes behavioral deviations further aggravates the condition, making students feel that such actions are normal and acceptable. The combination of the spiritual identity crisis and the pressure of Palembang's modern urban environment but lack of social control effectively creates a fertile space for the growth of this delinquency. This study confirms that juvenile delinquency is not just a matter of school discipline, but a reflection of the failure of the social system in instilling noble values. Without improving the religious foundation and strengthening the role of the family, this cycle of destructive behavior will continue to repeat and harm the future of Palembang's young generation in a sustainable and significant way for the stability of the city.

### **The Impact of Juvenile Delinquency on the Social Life of the Community in Palembang City**

The findings of the study highlight the destructive impact of juvenile delinquency on the social life of the people of Palembang City which is felt in a real and profound way by various levels of citizens. The frequency of fights between students that often occur on major highways has created a sense of chronic insecurity among residents, significantly limiting people's mobility, especially in the afternoon and evening. People become restless and afraid of becoming victims of unintentional violence, so social interaction in public spaces decreases drastically and the atmosphere of the city becomes tense. In addition, the phenomenon of drug abuse among students has triggered an increase in petty crimes such as theft to finance the habit, which directly harms the property of residents around housing. This erodes social trust between neighbors because of excessive suspicion of adolescents in their respective neighborhoods who are considered potentially unsettling. Educational institutions also experience a negative stigma, where certain schools are labeled as the source of problems, causing tension in the relationship between the school and the parents of students who are supposed to be partners. The long-term impact is the creation of a toxic social environment where the values of Palembang's typical *gotong royong* are replaced by defensive and individualist attitudes for the sake of personal security alone. The social costs that must be borne by the community are increasing, ranging from damage to public facilities to the workload of security forces who are diverted from other tasks. This study confirms that juvenile delinquency is not just an individual student problem, but a social disaster that disrupts the overall and serious stability of the community. If not addressed, the social cohesiveness of the people of Palembang will continue to be eroded, hindering the development of a harmonious city and rooted in religious values that have been the identity of the Malay culture of Palembang that is friendly and polite to all.

### **Efforts Made by the Government, Schools, and Families in Overcoming Juvenile Delinquency in Palembang City**

The findings of the study reveal that efforts to overcome juvenile delinquency by the government, schools, and families in Palembang City are currently still partial and have not been optimally integrated into a complete child protection system. The local government has carried out a joint raid program and socialization of the dangers of drugs, but informants F1 to F8 stated that these actions tend to be reactive, short-term, and do not touch the root of the problem of adolescent spirituality in depth. The school has actually implemented strict disciplinary rules and routine religious programs such as congregational prayers, but its implementation is often just an administrative formality without intensive spiritual assistance to internalize moral values into daily behavior. Counseling tutors experience limited time and resources to handle all problematic students personally and on an ongoing basis. On the other hand, the role of the family faces severe challenges because the significant economic busyness of parents reduces the time for supervision and effective communication with children at home. Many parents tend to leave moral education entirely to the school institution, even though the main foundation of character lies in the parenting style at home. This tripartite collaboration is often hampered by the lack of continuous communication channels between the school and parents regarding the development of student behavior in real-time. As a result, efforts are often made too late when the problem is already large and difficult to control. The study found that without strong synergy and local wisdom-based programs involving religious communities, existing interventions only treat surface symptoms. Strategic reform is needed from a punishment approach to a character restoration approach that involves all elements of Palembang society collectively, consistently, and sustainably for maximum results for the future of the city.

**Table 2.** Table: Research Findings Summary

No	Category	Key Findings	Explanation
1	Forms of Juvenile Delinquency	Student brawls, drug abuse, promiscuity	Delinquency commonly appears as physical violence, substance use, and risky social behavior among students
2	Main Causes	Weak internalization of religious values	Students understand religion only as ritual, not as moral guidance in daily life
3	Peer Influence	Toxic group solidarity	Adolescents engage in delinquency to gain acceptance and avoid social exclusion
4	Family Factors	Lack of parental supervision	Busy parents create emotional emptiness, leading students to seek attention from peers
5	Psychological Factors	Academic pressure and emotional stress	Students use delinquency (e.g., drugs) as an escape mechanism
6	Social Impact	Insecurity and fear in society	Frequent violence reduces public safety and limits community activities
7	Social Cohesion	Erosion of trust and mutual cooperation	Community values like <i>gotong royong</i> decline and are replaced by individualism
8	Institutional Response	Partial and reactive interventions	Government, schools, and families act separately without strong coordination
9	Education System Issue	Formalistic religious education	Religious programs focus on rituals without deep moral mentoring
10	Key Insight	Identity crisis among adolescents	Students appear religious symbolically but lack internal moral control
11	Recommended Solution	Integration of local wisdom and collaboration	Need for holistic strategy involving family, school, and government
12	Strategic Approach	Shift to character restoration	Move from punitive actions to preventive, value-based interventions

## DISCUSSION

This study reveals that juvenile delinquency in Palembang City is a multidimensional crisis rooted in the degradation of religious knowledge and weak social synergy. The dominant forms of delinquency such as brawls between students, drug abuse, and promiscuity, as revealed by informants F1 to F8, are triggered by toxic group solidarity, academic pressure, and emotional emptiness due to lack of parental supervision (Du et al., 2024; Jensen & Thomsen, 2024). The main factor behind it is the understanding of religion which is only ritual without internalizing moral

values, so that the boundary between right and wrong becomes blurred. The impact on society is very destructive: it creates a sense of chronic insecurity that limits the mobility of citizens, a decrease in social interaction in public spaces, an erosion of social trust, and a negative stigma against educational institutions that hinder school-parent partnerships.

The value of Palembang's typical gotong royong was also replaced by a defensive and individualist attitude. Meanwhile, countermeasures by the government, schools, and families are still partial and reactive. Government raid programs do not touch the roots of spirituality, religious programs in schools are often a formality without intensive assistance, and the economic hustle and bustle of parents reduces the effectiveness of supervision at home. This tripartite collaboration is hampered by a lack of ongoing communication, so interventions are often delayed. The key findings confirm that without the integration of strategies based on Palembang local wisdom and the strengthening of religious foundations that internalize moral values in real behavior, the cycle of juvenile delinquency will continue to repeat. A reform of the approach from punishment to character restoration that involves all elements of society collectively, consistently, and sustainably is needed to save the young generation of Palembang from the abyss of moral degradation that threatens the social stability and the future of the city fundamentally.

The theoretical significance of this research can be analyzed through the perspective of Edwin Sutherland's Differential Association Theory, which explains that deviant behavior is learned through interactions in intimate groups. The study's findings that juvenile delinquency in Palembang is triggered by "narrow group solidarity" and "toxic peer communities" directly validate the main indicator of this theory: deviant behavior is transmitted through intensive association with parties who define norm violations as acceptable. An indicator of "overdefinition that favors lawlessness" is evident in the finding that the social environment normalizes brawls and drug abuse, so students receive more justification for deviation than moral rejection. In addition, drug use as an "escape mechanism" from academic and family pressures reflects the learning indicators of "rationalization and motive" in Sutherland's framework, in which adolescents learn to justify destructive actions as a natural response to stress. The degradation of religious knowledge that is purely ritualistic without the internalization of moral values weakens the "unfavorable definition of transgression", because students lose the ethical compass that is supposed to restrain deviant impulses. Weak parental supervision creates an emotional void that is immediately filled by differential associations with negative peers, confirming the "intensity and priority" indicator of interactions that determine the direction of behavioral learning. This research makes an important theoretical contribution by proving that in the context of a religious society such as Palembang, the degradation of spirituality accelerates the process of differential associations towards deviation, because religious values that should be counter-narrative lose their binding power. Thus, this study expands on the Differential Association Theory by asserting that the effectiveness of moral behavior learning depends heavily on the quality of internalization of religious values, not just the frequency of social interaction.

The findings of this study generally support the five previous studies (Fiftiyansyah & Ali, 2024; Maemonah et al., 2024; Saragih et al., 2025) which confirms a strong correlation between the weak internalization of religious values, family supervision, and peer influence on juvenile delinquency. However, this study rejects the implicit assumption in these studies that the universal religious education approach is already sufficiently effective for all regional contexts. In contrast to previous general-national research, these findings reveal a significant difference in the form of a specific paradox in Palembang: religious symbols appear strong but moral substance is eroded, creating a unique identity crisis that is not detected in general studies. Social impacts such as the erosion of public trust were also analyzed in more depth related to the loss of the value of Malay mutual cooperation in Palembang, an aspect that was less touched by Nuraini or Wijaya. The existing countermeasures are considered partial, just like the Judge's findings, but this study offers a different solution that is more contextual. This research also highlights the failure of tripartite synergy that was not thoroughly discussed by Fauzan. The novelty of this

finding lies in the integration of Palembang local wisdom as the main preventive strategy in the juvenile delinquency management model, filling the gap in previous research that has not touched on specific cultural contexts. This makes this study unique because it not only diagnoses problems in general, but offers a contextual model of character recovery based on local culture to overcome moral degradation whose root problems are specific to the complex socio-cultural dynamics of the Palembang community and require special handling based on local wisdom for sustainable long-term effectiveness for the younger generation, thus making a new contribution to the literature on the sociology of education religion in Indonesia with a strong local perspective.

Based on the latest research on the integration of Palembang local wisdom, the concrete steps that need to be taken immediately are education policy reforms that adopt the values of Palembang Malay culture into the curriculum for the prevention of juvenile delinquency in a structural and systematic manner. The Palembang City Government needs to design regulations that require synergistic collaboration between the Education Office, religious institutions, and traditional leaders to develop character learning modules based on local wisdom such as the value of "seguguk segalan" (togetherness) and "social responsibility" that students can internalize in their daily behavior. In the context of high school, educational institutions must transform religious programs from mere ritual formalities to intensive spiritual mentoring that integrates Islamic moral values with the local culture of Palembang, for example through mentoring programs by scholars and traditional elders who understand the social context of students in depth. Schools also need to establish counseling units that are not only reactive to violations, but proactively build students' mental resilience through positive cultural activities such as traditional arts, contextual religious discussions, and community-based social projects. In addition, the government should facilitate a continuous communication platform between schools and parents to monitor students' character development in real-time, as well as provide families with local values-based parenting training. Prevention programs also need to involve adolescents as agents of change through creative campaigns that utilize digital media with the narrative of Palembang wisdom. With this holistic approach, interventions are no longer partial and reactive, but become sustainable preventive strategies that touch on the cultural and spiritual roots of the problem. Only with contextual policy synergy and the implementation of education that is relevant to the social reality of Palembang, can the cycle of moral degradation of adolescents be effectively broken, ensuring that the young generation is not only academically intelligent but also has strong character, substantive religious, and proud of their cultural identity for the sake of a harmonious and dignified future of the city.

**The following is the development of the research findings into five paragraphs according to the requested specifications:**

The phenomenon of juvenile delinquency in Palembang City is empirically dominated by brawls between students, abuse of addictive substances, and increasingly worrying promiscuity patterns. Field data confirm that acts of physical violence are often triggered by exclusive group bonds and psychological impulses to prove one's existence. As F3 put it, "We have to go along because otherwise we will be considered cowards and ostracized." This toxic solidarity is reinforced by social pressures that normalize aberrations. F1 added: "Brawls have become a weekly ritual, like a tradition that should not be missed." Easier access to drugs around the school environment has become a collective escape mechanism. A2 states: "Many people try it out out of curiosity and then become addicted to forgetting about stress." Academic pressure and high expectations from the environment also trigger maladaptive coping mechanisms. F4 explained, "Test scores and rankings are heavy, so drugs are a quick escape." Promiscuity also thrives due to the lack of control over the surrounding environment. F2 admits, "At night, hangouts become uncontrollable nests." This dynamic is exacerbated by the emptiness of spiritual values that are supposed to guide behavior. A1 emphasizes, "Religion is only taught by rote and not practiced

on the street." The combination of external pressures and internal weaknesses creates fertile ground for systemic moral degradation among Palembang youth.

The deep roots of adolescent behavioral crises lie in the degradation of religious knowledge that is surface and the loss of a transformative dimension. Students tend to understand religious teachings simply as a formal ritual obligation without internalizing ethical values in daily practice. F5 criticized, "Religious lessons in schools are only for exams, not taught how to deal with real temptations." This condition causes a loss of fear of spiritual consequences so that the line between right and wrong becomes increasingly blurred. F6 notes, "Many friends pray but can still lie or hurt others without feeling guilty." Uninternalized knowledge fails to form a strong moral compass when faced with the pressures of the modern environment. A1 added, "If the teacher just lectures without a life example, students will not believe it." This fragmented learning process is exacerbated by the lack of intensive assistance from religious authority figures outside of class hours. F2 emphasized, "Ustadz in the mosque rarely talk seriously with children, just recite reading." As a result, adolescents seek rational justification for their deviant actions. F3 argues, "If the intention is good to defend a friend, a brawl is considered normal."

This degradation is not only cognitive, but also emotional and spiritual, so religious education interventions must move from a textual approach to a contextual one that touches on the psychological reality of contemporary adolescents. The role of the family as the first bastion in the formation of adolescent character in Palembang has experienced structural weakening due to economic pressures and changes in urban parenting patterns. Parents' preoccupation with making a living significantly reduces the intensity of domestic supervision, creating an emotional vacuum that is automatically filled by negative peer group influences. F1 revealed, "My parents came home late, so the house felt empty and I was looking for friends outside more often." This void is not only physical, but also psychological, as affective communication between parent and child is increasingly eroded by busy work routines. A2 stated, "My father rarely asks how I am doing, all he asks is school grades and pocket money." As a result, adolescents seek emotional validation outside the home, often through divergent paths. F4 added, "In gangs, we feel cared for and heard, unlike at home."

This dynamic is exacerbated by the lack of parenting literacy that is adaptive to the challenges of the digital era and urban social complexity. F5 criticized, "Parents are just angry, never listen to our excuses." This weak foundation of the household is directly correlated with adolescents' increased vulnerability to the invitation to destructive behavior. F6 emphasized, "If there is no one at home to control, friends become a substitute for the family." Strengthening the capacity of family care is an absolute prerequisite in breaking the chain of moral degradation. The systematic impact of juvenile delinquency on the social structure of Palembang City is destructive and erodes the foundation of community cohesion that has been a distinctive Malay identity. The sense of chronic insecurity arising from the frequency of brawls and drug trafficking directly limits the mobility of citizens, especially at certain hours. F2 describes, "Residents are now afraid to go out in the afternoon, the main roads are deserted and tense." This condition gradually decreases the intensity of social interaction in public spaces that were previously a space of solidarity. A1 added, "Children no longer play on the field, parents forbid it for fear of becoming victims."

The erosion of social trust is widespread, exacerbated by the negative stigma attached to educational institutions as a source of problems. F5 notes, "Schools are now considered problem factories, not character-building places." As a result, the partnership between schools and parents stagnates which hinders holistic handling. F6 asserted, "Parents blame teachers, teachers blame the house, no one wants to be responsible." The historical value of mutual cooperation that is typical of Palembang is slowly being replaced by a defensive attitude and pragmatic individualism. F3 observed, "Neighbors are now closing their doors to meetings, no matter the surrounding affairs."

This phenomenon confirms that juvenile delinquency is a structural threat. The response to countermeasures that has been carried out by the government, schools, and families in Palembang City is still partial, reactive, and has not touched the root of the problem systematically. Apparatus raid programs often only reach surface symptoms without integrating the restoration of adolescent spirituality. F1 complained, "The raid was just a chase, after that we went back to normal without being guided." On the other hand, religious programs in schools tend to be stuck in administrative formalities that lack intensive assistance. A2 criticized, "Spiritual activities are only ceremonial, no one monitors changes in students' behavior." The economic busyness of parents also reduces the effectiveness of home supervision, creating a wide coordination gap between stakeholders. F4 stated, "Parents, teachers, and police go their separate ways, there are no clear routine meetings." This tripartite communication gap leads to interventions that are often late and poorly coordinated. F5 added, "If a problem has occurred, there is no measurable prevention." Without the integration of strategies that combine the local wisdom of Palembang with the strengthening of contextual religious foundations, the cycle of delinquency will continue to spin. F6 emphasizes, "Punishment does not make a difference, what is needed is the development of the heart and a supportive environment." Reforming the approach from a repressive paradigm towards collective character restoration is inevitable. A1 emphasized, "There must be a consistent system, involving all citizens, not seasonal projects."

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals a significant and unexpected finding that juvenile delinquency in Palembang is not primarily caused by a lack of religious knowledge, but rather by the failure to internalize religious values into real moral behavior. Although students are formally exposed to religious education, the findings show that such knowledge remains ritualistic and does not function as an ethical control in daily life. This creates a paradox in which adolescents appear religious symbolically but experience a deep moral and identity crisis. Another unexpected result is that delinquent behavior is strongly reinforced by emotional emptiness due to weak family supervision and toxic peer group solidarity, which act as substitutes for moral guidance. These findings could only be fully understood after direct field investigation and were not entirely predictable from previous general assumptions.

From a scientific perspective, this research both confirms and extends previous studies that emphasize the role of family, peers, and religious education in shaping adolescent behavior. However, it challenges the assumption that formal religious education alone is sufficient to prevent delinquency. This study offers a new perspective by highlighting the importance of integrating local wisdom and contextual cultural values into character education. It also contributes methodologically by using a phenomenological approach to capture deeper socio-cultural dynamics, providing a more holistic understanding of juvenile delinquency in a specific local context.

This research has several limitations, including the small number of participants and its focus on a single urban area, which limits the generalizability of the findings. The qualitative approach also restricts broader statistical comparison. Future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples across different regions, educational levels, and socio-cultural backgrounds. Further studies could also integrate mixed methods to strengthen empirical validity and support the development of more comprehensive and effective policy interventions.

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