



## Social Adaptation of Adolescents Who Have Faced the Law

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### ABSTRACT

The experience of being a child in conflict with the law affects teenagers to adapt to their environment. The purpose of this study is to understand and describe social adaptation strategies that occur in adolescents who have been conflicted with the law. The research method used is qualitative-descriptive. This study involved two teenagers who had conflicted with the law at the Class IA Kutoarjo Child Correctional Institution, aged 17 and 19 years. The results showed that one of the two informants still felt social anxiety when returning to the community. In contrast, the other informant believed adapting to their environment. The informants' social adaptation strategy consisted of three kinds, namely behavioral adaptation, tactical adaptation, and process adaptation. The strategy for social adaptation of adolescents who have conflicted with the law is to begin to involve themselves in the community by establishing adequate communication with those around them, participating in community activities, and reversing the negative stigma of others against them.

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## INTRODUCTION

The public's view of the status of ex-convicts impacts their social life. Someone who gets out of prison is considered a wrong person who has committed acts that violate norms by the people of Benua Jengah Village. The community discriminated against ex-convicts by avoiding and not accepting them for work and complicating population administration such as making identity cards. This discrimination happens because people's trust in ex-convicts has been lost, and they are afraid that ex-convicts will harm their business (Najibuddin, 2014). The opposing view of society results in stigma and discriminatory behavior towards ex-convicts. On the other hand, a positive view raises public support and acceptance of ex-convicts in the community (Puspitasari, 2015).

Ex-convicts interpret convict status as part of their life journey that must be passed and take lessons to be learned from inmate status (Puspitasari, 2015). Ex-convicts adapt by forming a new self-concept after they are released from prison. The formation of the self-concept of ex-convicts occurs through social interaction. Lestari et al. (2016) describe that prisoner experience positive changes after leaving prison through adaptation to their environment, more often participating in social activities in the community, such as recitation, tahlilan, and attending weddings. Ex-convicts are also obedient to worship and stay away from evil associations and habits in the past, such as drinking, using drugs, stealing, or hanging out with bad friends.

Hilman and Indrawati (2017) revealed that relationships with family and social environment negatively affect the emergence of criminal acts. The experience of being a prisoner has a positive and negative impact on juvenile prisoners. The positive impact experienced by former

juvenile convicts is that they become more concerned about their surroundings and independent. The negative impact is that adolescents feel ashamed and have difficulty accepting status as ex-convicts. Juvenile ex-convicts are under pressure from the community they live in, and make them look bad. As a result, ex-convicts return to deviant behavior after leaving the coaching institution. In addition, former inmates also experience economic pressure because they do not get jobs, and their education is cut off after leaving the coaching institution (Akbar, 2018).

Research by Alfianur et al. (2020) shows that children who experience emotional violence from their parents, teachers, or people have a 56.6% higher probability of committing violence than children who do not experience emotional violence from those around them. The findings of Novita and Margarita (2012) stated that emotional violence with a tendency to juvenile delinquency has a correlation coefficient of 0.288 with a significance level of 0.000.

Yulianto et al. (2014) revealed a relationship between parental care and the risk of violence in adolescents. Good parenting will have a 2,929 times chance to reduce the risk of adolescents experiencing violence compared to poor parenting. Afirio et al. (2016) found that the higher the family's social support, the lower the depression level of juvenile prisoners at the Pontianak Children's Special Guidance Institute. Inadequate parenting, low-income family economic conditions, low education level, nasty playmates, and committing crimes are predictors of juvenile criminal behavior (Haider & Mahsud, 2010). Anggreiny et al. (2017) stated that adolescent perpetrators of sexual violence had a less close relationship with one of their parent figures. They also have difficulty adapting to the environment, solving

problems, and acting aggressively. They feel inferior and lack confidence in their abilities.

After being released from prison, teenagers who have conflicted with the law need to adapt socially. Social adaptation is an individual's ability to react effectively and harmoniously to social realities and situations and to be able to establish healthy social relationships (Afirio et al., 2016). Children who conflict with the law also need social adaptation skills in order to be able to establish a harmonious relationship with the surrounding environment.

From the initial data collection conducted by researchers in May 2020 to three teenagers who had faced the law, it was found that the three informants felt less confident in dealing with various life problems. With a case of sexual violence, Informant A feels less confident in facing his future. Informant F felt unwelcome in his community with a case of sexual violence. Meanwhile, informant H had difficulty registering for school because of his status as an ex-convict with the case of beatings. Two of the three informants, namely A and H, tried to ignore the negative stigma from the community. Informant F tries to communicate with the surrounding community to know his changes after being released from prison.

The community considers ex-convicts to have a strong tendency to become recidivists, especially if they have a history of being detained more than once. Hence, people tend to keep their distance from ex-convicts. This attitude of society makes ex-convicts feel depressed and bear a heavy moral burden. This situation encourages them to commit crimes again as they have done before. The purpose of this study is to understand the social adaptation strategies of adolescents who have conflicted with the law.

The theoretical benefit of this research is to enrich the reference for studies of social psychology, especially regarding the social adaptation of ex-convicts. This research is also expected to be useful for future researchers who want to explore the social adaptation strategies of ex-convicts. Practically, this research is expected to provide knowledge to the public about the social adaptation strategies carried out by former juvenile convicts when returning to the community to treat them well.

Based on the explanation above, it is crucial to study the social adaptation strategy of adolescents who have faced the law. The research question in this study is how are the social adaptation strategies used by adolescents who have conflicted with the law?

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses the descriptive qualitative method. Descriptive research is research that is directed to reveal symptoms, facts, or events systematically and accurately regarding the characteristics of a particular population or area (Hardani et al., 2020). This study aims to understand social adaptation strategies for children in conflict with the law.

The selection of research informants was carried out purposively. The informants are teenagers who have conflicted with law in the Class IA Kutoarjo Child Correctional Institution (LPKA – Lembaga Pembinaan Khusus Anak), aged 17 and 19 years. At this age, social adjustment is critical because it is related to completing adolescent developmental tasks to develop optimally be happy and productive (Yanizon, 2016). Based on these criteria, several informants met the criteria, but only two informants were willing to participate in this study.

**Table 1. Subject Identity**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
Name	MA	SH
Current age	±19 years old	±17 years old
Age when indictment	± 17 years old	± 14 years old
Gender	Male	Male
Last education	SMP	SMP
Article	Obscenity, 76E Jo Article 82 verse (1).	Beating, article 170 KUHP.
Verdict	5 years.	4 years.
Length of time in prison	± 2 years 2 month.	± 1 years 10 month.
Living with	Mother	Mother

The research data was collected using the interview method. Interviews are questions and answers between researchers and informants, which provide opportunities for informants to express their hearts, views, and opinions so that researchers can obtain the information they are looking for (Sarwono, 2014). The interviews conducted were semi-structured interviews, which allowed the informants to express their experiences during the interviews.

Recorded interviews were compiled into verbatim transcripts to facilitate data analysis. Then the researcher analyzed the data by identifying the themes that emerged in the interview data. Such analysis techniques are part of data reduction. Data reduction is part of the analysis that sharpens, categorizes, directs, discards unnecessary, and organizes data so that conclusions can finally be drawn and verified (Hardani, Ustiawaty, Istiqomah, Fardani, Sykmana, & Auliya, 2020).

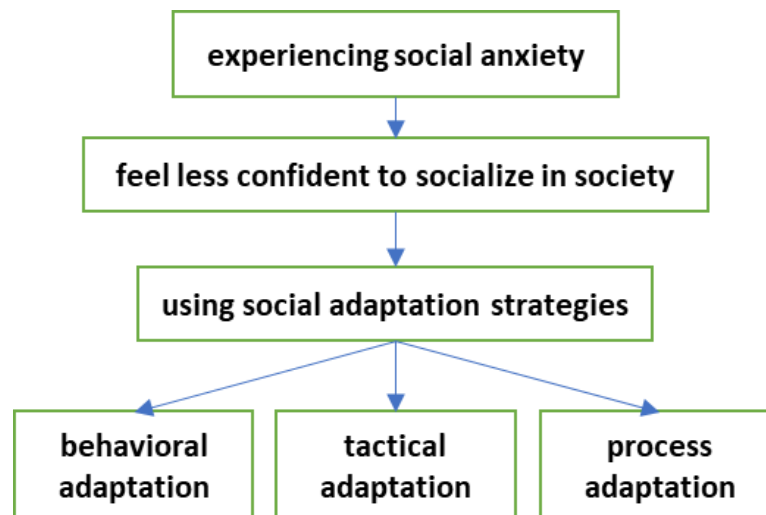
Member checking is used to obtain data accuracy. Validation of this data is done by providing a sheet containing the informant's statement to be checked and confirmed by the informant. According to Hardani et al. (2020), member check is a technique to increase the credibility of

qualitative research results by involving informants to review the transcripts of the data obtained. The conclusion of the research results is declared credible if the informant agrees with everything reported by the researcher.

### **RESEARCH RESULT**

The interviews with the two informants showed that the informants experienced painful situations while in prison. Informant SH was traumatized by witnessing a fight in LPKA which resulted in SH preferring to be alone and avoiding his peers in LPKA. Meanwhile, the MA informant feels pessimistic about getting a bright future because he has become an ABH. When they first entered LPKA, both informants had experienced physical violence from ABH, who had previously been in LPKA.

From the results of the study, five themes emerged in the data, namely (1) feelings of adolescents after leaving prison, (2) plans after leaving prison, (3) social adaptation strategies, and (4) factors that influence social adaptation strategies. Psychological dynamics that occur in adolescents to make social adaptations can be seen in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. The Dynamics of Social Adaptation of Adolescents Who Have Confronted the Law**

## DISCUSSION

Incidents of violence that informants SH and MA have experienced caused problems for them. According to Daffanur (2018), the cause of acts of violence is the relationship of power relations from prisoners who feel influential to weaker prisoners. The inmate in power is the one who goes to prison first and who has more money. The imbalance of power also led to mop or violence committed between inmates when they entered prison.

### ABH teenagers' feelings when they leave prison

MA's feelings after leaving prison were pleased. MA helps mother do housework such as cleaning the house and selling at her mother's shop. His mother sells cosmetics, tongs, shoes, and sandals in the front stall of the factory in the Bawen area. MA has a step-sister who also sells clothes next to her stall. MA lives with his mother and son in the boarding house. MA's father is in prison for a rape case, and MA has not seen his father since MA was in prison.

SH was pleased when his prison term ended because he could live freely and be reunited with his family again. However, SH is also afraid of getting revenge from the

victim's family and ridiculing the environment. When SH left LPKA, he spent much time at home and rarely joined his friends because his family had forbidden him.

Based on the study results, it was found that the two informants were happy to be free from prison. Their happiness is expressed by always helping with family matters at home. However, after several months, informant SH felt constrained by the prohibition to leave the house, asking to leave the house. SH behave indicates the emotional maturity of the informant. Emotional maturity is the individual's ability to control and express emotions according to the situation to adapt to the circumstances (Fitri & Adelya, 2017). Adolescents can experience better emotional development if they get positive examples from their environment, families, and the surrounding community (Azmi, 2016). Emotional maturity has an essential role in adolescent self-concept to keep adolescents from naughty behavior (Muawanah & Pratikto, 2012).

### Adolescent ABH plans after leaving prison.

After leaving prison, the MA informant wanted to finish job training and school and make his mother happy as planned when he

was still in prison. Nevertheless, MA's expectation has not been achieved because many problems occur in his life at this time. The status of his detention period is still being simulated at home, and it is not clear when the MA informant will start on-the-job training. Although the MA informant has tried to ask prison officials, there has been no news so far. MA continues to hope and does not want to be trapped in thinking about his past as an ABH.

The MA informant had worked at the Lamongan shop for two days. However, the MA informant stopped working because he felt that he could not carry out his duties to maintain the Lamongan stall alone for nine hours. MA has also worked part-time as a wedding committee with the task of helping to draft event concepts and being a waitress at weddings. However, he no longer works part-time because there are rarely weddings during the rainy season. MA once applied for a job at the cottage as a cook, but he did not continue the application process. A two-year work contract could not bind MA because he still wanted to take on-the-job training.

Meanwhile, informant SH plans to help his family's economy. SH is the only child, and his father has passed away. SH only lives with his mother, who owns a grocery store at home. In addition to carrying out his obligations as a student, SH also started a screen-printing business with the skills he got from LPKA and skills training from his uncle in Bandung. SH felt constrained because his mother's extended family asked him to simultaneously focus on school and work. SH was asked to continue the screen-printing business and manage the fields from his late father. Even though SH feels less accessible because he still wants to play with his peers, SH continues his screen-printing business because he does not want to burden his mother.

Due to family economic problems, SH decided to work according to his skills while in prison. The decision proves that skills

training for inmates in prison can overcome the problem of community refusal of ex-convicts to work when they have returned to society (Gossard, 2019).

MA cooking skills and SH screen printing skills obtained from LPKA result from the assistance carried out in LPKA. According to Fakhrah and Purnamaningsih (2020), the ACTIVE (I am Positive) training as a provision for ABH to enter the community has proven to increase ABH's self-esteem. In addition to providing skills, teenagers who have conflicted with the law also need instrumental support such as screen-printing facilities obtained from SH's uncle and information support such as job vacancies from MA's mother and sister. This support is a protective factor for teenagers who have been ABHs to rise and adapt to society (Fauziyah, Suryanto, & Rahayu, 2019).

### **Psychological dynamics in the social adaptation of ABH adolescents**

Adolescents who have conflicted with the law (ABH) experience social anxiety when returning to society. MA felt that his existence was not recognized when he attended the tahlilan event because no one was invited to talk, while MA was still not confident enough to start a conversation. MA is worried that the local community will discuss MA's past because the victim of MA's case is his neighbor, even though this has not happened yet. MA only greets when he crosses paths with local people. After leaving prison, MA never communicated with his victims but often greeted the victim's grandparents when they met.

Unlike MA, informant SH was at home a few months after leaving prison because he was still withdrawing from his surroundings. SH received discriminatory actions from the community where he lived, such as being given unpleasant responses by those around him, being mocked indirectly, and being ignored when speaking in

gatherings. After several months, SH finally tried to improve his relationship with the people around him by hanging out and joining in the conversations of those around him. SH also assists his neighbors by teaching him how to use a cell phone.

At the beginning of leaving prison, both informants withdrew from their surroundings and received an unpleasant reaction from the local community. Rasyid, Apriani, Irianti, & Verlanda (2017) revealed that adolescents who cannot open themselves in society would experience isolation from the environment. The impact is that the support from the environment becomes minimal, so teenagers have difficulty adjusting to the environment.

SH regularly attends tahlilan events his neighbors hold when he does not have much schoolwork and online events. SH also participated in Isyra 'Mi'raj activities in his village. Kusumaningsih (2017) stated that the better self-acceptance, the less anxiety about status as a prisoner. Humans always try to adapt to the surrounding environment biologically, genetically, and culturally. The process of adaptation in evolution involves genetic selection and cultural variants as the best way to solve environmental problems (Bennett, 2005).

Ex-convicts are worried if the public response or the stigma is circulating, which will impact ABH and their parents and families. Ginting and Santoso (2019) refer to this condition as social anxiety. There are three aspects of social anxiety: fear of negative evaluation and fear of the negative view of others towards him. Second, anxiety and social avoidance in new situations, feeling afraid in situations that have never been experienced before, or fear of strangers. Third, anxiety and social avoidance of people in general, thus avoiding those around them (Sánchez-García et al., 2013).

Informants use three social adaptation strategies: behavioral adaptation, tactical

adaptation, and process adaptation. SH informants carried out behavioral adaptation by assimilating themselves with the environment. Adaptation is needed because it can help a person to face, live, adjust to a new environment and pressure so that teenagers can live a good life (Muhliansyah, Putri, Rasyid, Adriansyah, & Diana, 2019). Adaptation to the environment is also one of the determinants of how a person behaves.

The statement above shows that SH desires to get along socially, but his mother prohibits him from leaving the house. The MA informant still has not started communicating with the surrounding community because he feels inferior to his status as an ABH. This feeling of inferiority arose because the victim of the legal case was his neighbor, so the MA informant was worried that someone would bring it up.

MA overcomes social anxiety by attending tahlilan and community service with his neighbors as an adaptation strategy. None of his neighbors spoke to MA in this activity, which MA feels alienated. However, MA also did not dare start a conversation even though he wanted to because he felt inferior.

MA's behavior indicates that MA feels not ready to get along with the community around where he lives. In contrast to informant SH, who has tried to start a conversation with his neighbors and never gives up on getting recognition, he has changed by providing help and opening himself up to interact with other people.

Social adaptation of ex-convicts in socializing with the community is manifested in a friendly attitude, greeting when meeting with neighbors, being gentle, respecting neighbors, establishing good communication with family and neighbors, including chatting together and sharing stories. Ex-convicts also actively participate in activities in the community, such as joining and socializing in the activities carried out,

responding to negative stigma by being patient with neighbors' words, and controlling emotions (Rezha et al., 2019).

The adaptation process carried out by the two informants was different. SH is more active in the environment to show his neighbors that SH has become better at the individual level. Meanwhile, SH tries to help his neighbors at the group level, getting involved in his neighbors' conversations. SH ignores the adverse reaction from the community towards his status as a former inmate and still tries to communicate well with the community. Machdi (2013) revealed that prisoners tend to ignore the negative stigma from society. In addition, SH also negotiates with his family to participate in activities with his friends. SH's effort indicates that SH is trying to solve problems with the environment that initially underestimated him by actively participating even though his family hoped that SH would stay at home and reduce activities in the surrounding community.

In contrast to SH, MA tends to withdraw from society and spends more time with his mother. In line with the opinion of Fristian et al. (2020), regardless of the adjustment efforts of ex-convicts that lead to positive and negative results, ex-convicts take a long time to be accepted by society again. Although this adaptation process is not visible in the community, it can be observed in the family environment. MA has tried to convey that he feels unappreciated when his mother decides to remarry without discussing it with MA first. The relation of MA and his mother shows the adaptation process at the group level, where MA makes an effort to resolve feelings of being unappreciated by conveying them directly to her mother. On an individual level, MA tried to refrain from expressing his frustration when his mother brought up his former status as an ABH because he thought her mother was having many problems.

John Bennet's social adaptation theory was used by Andriani and Jatningsih (2015) to examine the adaptation strategies of Papuan students living in Lamongan. The theory reveals three types of adaptation strategies: behavioral adaptation used to deal with differences, tactical adaptation used to deal with rejection, and process adaptation used to find similarities. This study revealed that adolescents who had been ABH used behavioral adaptation to re-socialize with the community because of their background as ex-convicts. Strategy adaptation is related to efforts to deal with social anxiety and negative stigma from society. Process adaptation is manifested in negotiating efforts with the family and community's social environment.

#### **Factors that influence the social adaptation of adolescents who have been ABH**

The factors that influence the social adaptation strategy of adolescents who have been ABH come from their family environment. MA's mother is a warm and caring person. A month after MA was released from prison, his mother often insinuated MA because of his experience as an ABH. The mother's actions made MA rebel and verbally oppose her mother. MA feels whatever he is done is always responded to cynically by his mother so that he is always in the wrong position when doing work. MA also feels that he is not valued as a child because his mother did not discuss when she decided to remarry with MA. MA had expressed his disappointment to his mother and even cried. However, MA never expressed his hurt when his past was brought up because he felt that his mother had many problems. MA has a step-sister who is caring and often gives advice to MA. Factors that influence adaptation include physical, psychological, economic, environmental, and religious conditions (Rezha et al., 2019). The family is one of the predictors of prisoners' quality of life, where



family support becomes the spirit and motivation for prisoners in their lives (Yulianti & Putri, 2015).

After leaving prison, SH's relationship with his mother became better. SH's mother became more attentive than before entering the prison. However, SH got a lot of unpleasant words from his extended family. SH and his mother are no longer considered part of his father's family because SH has defamed the family. Maheasy and Asriwandar (2017) reveal that the public's view of ex-convicts is always wrong and labeled as criminals.

Meanwhile, the mother's family still maintains a relationship and provides advice to SH, although they often say unpleasant words. SH is always trying to improve himself and show those around him that he has changed for the better. SH is closer to Allah and more obedient to worship. SH hopes to make his mother happy.

The social environment and playmates also influence the social adaptation strategy of adolescents who have faced the law. The MA informant hangs out with his old friends from junior high school and vocational school by visiting his friend's house after leaving prison. MA still communicates with schoolmates and friends from prison through social media. However, currently, MA feels more familiar with friends from prison. MA usually uses social media to create status, follow friends' uploads and marketplaces, communicate with friends and girlfriends. MA met his girlfriend through Facebook and had never met his girlfriend.

SH informants use social media to communicate with their friends, promote their business ventures, and participate in online learning from school. The social media used by SH are Facebook, Whatsapp, and Instagram. SH has many friends on social media; friends on social media are friends from his current school and middle school friends. SH also saves his neighbors'

contacts on social media accounts. SH has three groups on social media, namely a junior high school alumni group, a class group, and a group with friends to hang out with. However, SH is not actively communicating in social media groups.

Many of SH's junior high school friends stay away and do not want to see SH again. Although this disappointed SH, SH understood his friends' behavior who avoided him. SH is happy that he still has good friends. SH has good friends who interact with him like brothers. SH also often shares his worries with his girlfriend. SH has a good relationship with his girlfriend and his girlfriend's family.

When they first left the prison, the two informants spent much time at home and rarely gathered with the surrounding community. However, there are differences between the two informants in carrying out social adaptation strategies. SH had withdrawn after leaving prison and had received discriminatory actions from the community where he lived, such as being ignored when speaking or being viewed cynically. In terms of social interaction, SH's schoolmates before SH became ABH pretended not to know SH when SH returned to school. Meanwhile, MA has not received any discriminatory actions from the community or friends. However, the MA informant still feels that his existence is not recognized when he participates with the residents at the tahlilan event because no one talks to the MA. In contrast, the MA feels less confident to start a conversation.

Riswanto (2017) revealed the results of his research that the informant named Gus had the view that his delinquency was an outlet for the burden and responsibility of his social identity as a child of Kyai. Gus's efforts to adapt to society by doing positive actions, such as improving himself, speaking in a friendly and polite manner, and leaving old habits considered naughty by the community. Adjustment to the life of ex-

convicts consists of social interaction and social activities. Social interactions of ex-convicts include social attitudes and communication with their families and communities, which are realized by maintaining communication with the community, helping people in trouble, and participating in gathering with the community (Fristian et al., 2020).

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The strategy of social adaptation of adolescents who have conflicted with the law is carried out by being involved in community activities, starting with good communication with the people around them, participating in community activities, and improving the negative stigma of others against them. One of the two informants who have conflicted with the law still feels social anxiety when returning to society. Still, the other informants have confidence in their efforts to adjust to society.

Factors that affect the social adaptation strategy of adolescents who have faced the law are divided into inhibiting factors and supporting factors. The inhibiting factors come from families who limit their activities too much, negative stigma from society, and lack of self-confidence. The supporting factors are in the form of support from family, peers, and motivation to change.

The limitation of this research is that only two informants participated. It is challenging to obtain communication with teenagers who have conflicted with the law as perpetrators of criminal acts. Further researchers can increase the variety of cases studied to obtain richer data. Adolescents who have conflicted with the law are advised to continue to develop their potential and take advantage of social support as a motivational booster to change to become better people. In this way, it is

hoped that the community will accept ABH to rejoin it.

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