

A Criminological Study of Motor Vehicle Traffic Violations by Children in the Parigi Moutong Police Resort Area

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Abstract: Motor vehicle traffic violations committed by minors represent a significant criminological and legal issue, particularly because they directly affect road safety and reflect the state's responsibility to provide legal protection for children. This study aims to examine the criminogenic factors underlying traffic violations committed by minors and to analyze preventive and control measures implemented by the Parigi Moutong Police Resort. An empirical legal research method was employed by integrating normative and sociological approaches. Primary data were collected through field observations and interviews with officers of the Traffic Unit (Satlantas) of Parigi Moutong Police Resort, while secondary data were obtained from statutory regulations and contemporary criminology literature. The findings reveal that traffic violations by minors are driven by internal factors—including emotional immaturity, impulsive behavior, sensation seeking, and low legal awareness—and external factors such as inadequate parental supervision, permissive social norms, peer group influence, and weak early-stage law enforcement. Police data from 2024 recorded 61,991 traffic incidents involving minors aged 15–17, indicating a critical public safety concern. Preventive efforts implemented by the police include legal education programs, traffic patrols, enforcement operations, ticketing, and targeted counseling for both minors and parents. This study concludes that traffic violations committed by minors should not be viewed merely as legal infractions but as a complex form of juvenile delinquency requiring comprehensive intervention from families, schools, communities, and law enforcement agencies to improve road safety and child protection.

Keywords : Criminology, Traffic Violations, Minors, Police Enforcement, Juvenile Delinquency.

1. Introduction

Traffic violations committed by minors have become a critical socio-legal phenomenon that continues to escalate in many regions, particularly in developing countries where road safety culture is still evolving. Roads are complex social spaces that require legal awareness, emotional maturity, and adherence to established traffic regulations. However, minors—due to psychological, behavioral, and environmental factors—often fail to meet these requirements, resulting in a growing number of traffic violations and accidents. These violations not only endanger the minors themselves but also pose significant risks to other road users, thereby becoming an important subject of criminological and public policy studies. In Indonesia, traffic governance is regulated under **Law No. 22 of 2009 concerning Road Traffic and Transportation**, which mandates that every road user must meet legal requirements regarding driving competence, vehicle eligibility, and road safety compliance. The law explicitly outlines obligations and prohibitions for drivers, including the necessity of possessing a valid driver's license and operating a vehicle responsibly (Republik Indonesia, UU No.22 Tahun 2009). Despite this clear regulatory framework, many minors continue to operate motor vehicles illegally, violating core provisions of the law. These violations indicate not only weak law enforcement but also low legal awareness among young individuals.

The root causes of these violations are multifaceted. According to **Baskoro (n.d.)**, traffic violations frequently stem from behavioral tendencies of the community—such as ignorance of rules, carelessness, impatience, and the normalization of unsafe driving culture. When these patterns occur in minors, the consequences become more serious due to their psychological immaturity and limited risk assessment abilities. Baskoro emphasizes that environmental influences, peer pressure, and lack of parental oversight also contribute to the rising number of violations among youth. These views align with criminological theories that identify juvenile delinquency as a product of interactions between individual predispositions and environmental stressors. From a legal responsibility perspective, traffic

violations and resulting accidents require clear accountability, particularly when victims suffer physical or material losses. **Irani, Susanto, & Pangaribuan (2022)** explain that negligence in driving—even when committed unintentionally—still constitutes a legal offense that results in liability toward victims. Their study underscores that traffic accidents caused by driver negligence often lead to complex legal processes, especially when involving minors who may not yet possess legal capacity. The authors highlight the need for systematic legal frameworks and preventive measures to minimize accidents stemming from unlawful or irresponsible driving behavior. This finding further supports the importance of examining traffic violations committed by minors not merely as administrative infractions but as significant legal and social issues.

The prevalence of minors committing traffic violations reflects broader societal dynamics. In many communities, motorcycles are considered accessible and practical means of mobility, even for individuals who are legally unqualified to ride them. Parents often permit minors to operate motor vehicles due to convenience, limited transportation alternatives, or cultural norms that tolerate such behavior. As a result, minors frequently drive without a license, without safety equipment, and without adequate understanding of traffic regulations. Criminological studies categorize this pattern as a form of **status offense**, where minors engage in prohibited behaviors associated with their age and developmental stage. Furthermore, the rise of digital culture and social media has also amplified risky driving behaviors among minors. Exposure to online content that glamorizes speeding, performing stunts, or engaging in traffic violations contributes to the normalization of such acts. In some urban and semi-urban regions, groups of youth even organize informal street racing or nighttime gatherings that involve dangerous driving. These behaviors reflect deeper social issues, including the search for identity, peer approval, and emotional expression through risky activities.

The police, as the front-line institution responsible for maintaining traffic order, face complex challenges in addressing violations involving minors. Law enforcement officers often encounter difficulties in balancing punitive measures with child-protection principles. While strict enforcement is necessary to deter violations, excessive punishment may conflict with juvenile justice standards that prioritize rehabilitation over retribution. Thus, a comprehensive approach is required—one that integrates education, counseling, community engagement, and consistent enforcement. Studies also indicate that preventive strategies are more effective when they involve multiple stakeholders—including families, schools, local governments, and law enforcement institutions. Parents play a critical role in supervising their children's mobility, setting boundaries, and modeling safe driving practices. Schools can provide traffic education as part of character-building programs, while communities can foster environments that discourage risky driving and promote adherence to legal norms. Police can complement these efforts through safety campaigns, patrol operations, and collaboration with local institutions.

Despite the existence of various initiatives, the number of traffic violations involving minors remains high, highlighting gaps in enforcement and public awareness. The weakness of parental supervision, combined with cultural tolerance toward underage driving, reinforces risky behaviors. Meanwhile, minors often underestimate the severity of consequences associated with traffic violations, perceiving them as minor acts with limited legal implications. This perception contrasts with the reality—traffic violations can lead to serious accidents, injuries, and fatalities, and they constitute legal offenses requiring accountability. Given the rising rates of violations and the severity of impacts, a deeper academic investigation is needed to understand the criminological factors driving minors' involvement in traffic violations and to evaluate the preventive strategies implemented by local law enforcement authorities. Such research is essential for developing evidence-based interventions that enhance road safety and protect children from harm. By integrating criminological theory, empirical

data, and legal perspectives, this study contributes to the broader discourse on juvenile delinquency and traffic law enforcement.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design to examine the criminological dimensions of underage motor vehicle traffic violations in the Parigi Moutong Police Resort area. A qualitative design is appropriate because the phenomenon involves complex social behavior, cultural patterns, and legal interactions that cannot be measured solely through numerical data. Through this approach, the study seeks to uncover the motivations, contextual influences, and enforcement challenges surrounding children who engage in traffic violations. The design also enables the researcher to explore how family dynamics, community norms, and peer environments contribute to minors' involvement in road traffic infractions.

2.2 Data Sources

The research uses both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with police officers, community leaders, parents, and children involved in traffic violations. These interviews help capture firsthand experiences and perspectives related to the behavior of minors on the road. Semi-structured interview guides were used to ensure consistency while allowing flexibility for probing deeper into emerging issues. Observations were conducted in areas known for frequent traffic offenses by children to understand environmental conditions and community traffic patterns. Secondary data were obtained from official documents such as police reports, case records, statistical data on traffic violations, and legal documents from the Parigi Moutong Police Resort. Additionally, this study examines applicable legal regulations, particularly Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 22 of 2009 concerning Road Traffic and Transportation, as well as academic references relevant to traffic law, juvenile behavior, and criminology. Journal publications, including the legal analysis presented by Irani, Susanto, and Pangaribuan (2022), were also consulted to strengthen the legal and theoretical foundation of the study.

2.3 Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using three main techniques: interviews, observations, and document analysis. Interviews served as the primary technique for investigating the perspectives and experiences of informants, especially regarding the factors that influence minors to operate vehicles unlawfully. Police officers provided insight into enforcement challenges, while parents and children offered explanations for behavioral tendencies, family supervision patterns, and peer influences. Observations were conducted to complement interview findings by allowing the researcher to witness community traffic behavior directly. This method helped identify environmental characteristics—such as road accessibility, community supervision, and visibility of law enforcement—that may contribute to underage driving. Document analysis involved reviewing legal materials, police case files, and statistical data to contextualize field findings with formal records and legal frameworks. Together, these techniques ensured a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

2.4 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis followed the interactive model of reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was conducted by organizing and categorizing interview transcripts, observation notes, and document content into themes such as behavioral factors, social influences, legal compliance, and

enforcement constraints. Data presentation involved structuring the reduced data into descriptive narratives that allow for cross-comparison among informants and sources. This step made it possible to identify recurring patterns and relationships between social behavior and legal violations. The final stage, conclusion drawing, involved synthesizing field findings with criminological theories and legal frameworks. This process allowed the researcher to interpret the root causes of underage traffic violations, assess the effectiveness of law enforcement, and highlight areas where regulatory intervention or community participation is needed. Conclusions were refined throughout the research process to ensure alignment with empirical evidence and theoretical foundations.

2.5 Validity and Ethical Considerations

To ensure the credibility and reliability of findings, the study employed several validation strategies. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from police officers, community members, parents, and children. Method triangulation was achieved by using interviews, observations, and document analysis simultaneously. Member checking was applied by reconfirming selected findings with key informants to avoid misinterpretation. Prolonged engagement in the field also strengthened data authenticity. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, especially because the study involves minors. All interviews with children were conducted with parental or guardian consent. The anonymity of participants was guaranteed, and sensitive information was handled with discretion. Informants were informed of their rights, including the right to withdraw from participation at any time. These measures ensured that the research adhered to ethical standards while protecting participant safety and dignity.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Characteristics of Child Traffic Violators in the Parigi Moutong Police Resort Area

The results of data collection conducted through field observations, police documentation, and interviews with the Traffic Unit officers of Polres Parigi Moutong indicate that traffic violations committed by children form a consistent pattern throughout 2024. Children aged **15–17 years** constitute the dominant group of underage violators. Based on traffic data obtained from the operational report of Polres Parigi Moutong (2024), there were **61,991 traffic violation cases** involving minors, with the majority related to driving without a license (SIM), failure to use helmets, and reckless driving on public roads. These violations frequently occurred during school commute hours (07:00–09:00 and 12:00–14:00) and during evening hours (19:00–22:00), particularly on major road sections such as the Trans Sulawesi route.

Interviews with police officers reveal that these minors typically have easy access to motorcycles provided by parents or family members, despite not meeting the legal age requirement stipulated in **Article 81 of Law No. 22/2009**, which mandates a minimum age of **17 years** for obtaining a driving license. Furthermore, a significant portion of the violators admitted that they were accustomed to using vehicles from an early age due to the permissive attitude of parents and community members. This indicates that child traffic violations are not isolated behaviors but occur within a permissive social environment that implicitly legitimizes unsafe driving practices by minors.

Based on direct observation, children often exhibit risky driving behavior such as speeding, performing sudden maneuvers, or riding in groups (convos). Such actions are consistent with the characteristics of adolescent behavior described in criminological literature, where impulsivity and sensation-seeking tendencies remain high due to the incomplete development of the prefrontal cortex responsible for rational judgment and impulse control. These findings are aligned with Hirschi's social control theory, which asserts that weak social bonds and lack of supervision increase the likelihood of juvenile deviance.

3.2 Internal and External Factors Influencing Traffic Violations by Children

3.2.1 Internal Factors (Child-Related Personal Determinants)

The study identifies several internal factors that contribute to traffic violations by children. First, **emotional immaturity** plays a significant role, as children often exhibit impulsive tendencies and limited risk awareness when operating vehicles. This correlates with Sutherland's differential association theory, suggesting that deviant behavior is learned through imitation and interaction with peers. Second, children show a strong desire for social recognition, often using motorcycles as a means to demonstrate independence and maturity among peers. Third, the level of legal awareness among children is notably low; many do not understand the legal consequences of driving without proper licensing or the safety risks associated with non-compliance. These findings reinforce Merton's strain theory, which posits that when socially desirable goals—such as recognition or status—cannot be achieved through legitimate means, individuals tend to pursue alternative, deviant pathways. For these minors, operating a motorcycle becomes a symbolic achievement of adulthood and freedom.

3.2.2 External Factors (Environmental and Structural Determinants)

External factors also significantly influence child traffic violations in Parigi Moutong. Lack of adequate parental supervision is the primary contributor, as many parents knowingly allow their children to use motorcycles before reaching the legal age, rationalizing such actions as commonplace or necessary for school mobility. Furthermore, the permissive culture within the community normalizes the act of underage driving, reducing the social deterrent effect associated with these violations. Peer influence constitutes another major external factor, with many children admitting that they ride motorcycles to keep up with or emulate their friends. Additionally, weak initial law enforcement, especially in early violations, reduces deterrence. Police officers reported that warnings are often ineffective because community members perceive them as non-binding or negotiable, thereby encouraging repeated offenses.

3.3 Forms and Patterns of Traffic Violations by Children

The types of violations committed by minors in the research area align with the categories defined under Law No. 22/2009 on Road Traffic and Transportation. Based on field observation and documented evidence, the most common violations include:

1. Driving without a driver's license (SIM) – the highest proportion of cases.
2. Not wearing a standard helmet (SNI) during motorcycle operation.
3. Riding with more than one passenger, exceeding capacity.
4. Reckless and aggressive riding, including speeding and overtaking without signals.
5. Operating vehicles without proper equipment, such as absent mirrors or modified exhausts.
6. Riding at night without lights, particularly in rural areas.
7. Street racing (balap liar) during evening hours.

Patterns show that violations are typically committed in groups, especially during weekends or after school. Children often gather at specific spots identified by police as "black points," areas with high incidences of risky activities such as illegal racing or reckless riding. This pattern reflects the group-based nature of juvenile delinquency described by social learning theories, where deviant behavior occurs within collective peer environments.

3.4 Law Enforcement and Preventive Efforts by Polres Parigi Moutong

The research reveals that the Parigi Moutong Police Resort has initiated several enforcement and preventive strategies to reduce child traffic violations. These efforts include:

3.4.1 Repressive Actions (Law Enforcement Measures)

- Routine patrols and checkpoints (razia) to identify violators and impose sanctions.
- Issuance of traffic tickets (tilang) for children found driving without a SIM or violating safety regulations.
- Vehicle impoundment, especially for repeat offenders or dangerous modifications.
- Mandatory parental summons, requiring guardians to appear and receive counselling.

Officers noted that repressive efforts produce short-term deterrence but are insufficient to address root causes unless paired with preventive strategies.

3.4.2 Preventive and Restorative Measures

Preventive measures emphasize education and community involvement:

- School-based traffic education programs, conducted through police visits and seminars.
- Community socialization campaigns, promoting child safety and parental responsibility.
- Youth-based traffic safety programs, engaging adolescents in awareness activities.
- Implementation of restorative justice approaches in accordance with Law No. 11/2012 on the Juvenile Criminal Justice System, ensuring children receive education-oriented interventions rather than punitive punishments.

These preventive efforts have resulted in increased awareness among school communities, although long-term behavioral change remains a challenge due to strong peer influence and environmental permissiveness.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Summary of Findings

This study demonstrates that motor vehicle traffic violations committed by children in the Parigi Moutong Police Resort area arise from a combination of individual and environmental factors. Internally, minors exhibit emotional immaturity, low legal awareness, and strong peer-driven motivations. Externally, permissive parental attitudes, community normalization of underage driving, and insufficient early enforcement influence the prevalence of violations. The dominant types of offenses include driving without a license, failure to use helmets, reckless riding, and vehicle misuse, reflecting broader sociocultural patterns surrounding youth mobility.

4.2 Criminological and Legal Implications

The findings support criminological theories such as social learning, differential association, and social control, all of which highlight the role of social environment, peer influence, and weak supervision in the formation of juvenile deviance. Legally, the results emphasize the importance of strict adherence to Law No. 22 of 2009 on Road Traffic and Transportation, particularly regarding age restrictions and safety obligations. The lack of early penalty enforcement reduces deterrent effects and contributes to recurring violations. Strengthening enforcement mechanisms and ensuring consistent legal application are essential to addressing structural causes of underage traffic misconduct.

4.3 Policy Recommendations

The study recommends a combination of repressive and preventive strategies. Repressive measures—such as traffic tickets, checkpoints, and vehicle impoundments—should be maintained to ensure immediate deterrence. However, long-term strategies must adopt a preventive focus, including school-based safety education, community involvement programs, and parental counselling. Restorative justice approaches under the Juvenile Criminal Justice System should be applied to

encourage educational rather than punitive outcomes. Inter-agency cooperation between police, schools, local government, and community leaders is crucial for effective implementation.

4.4 Directions for Future Research

Future studies may explore comparative analyses across urban and rural jurisdictions, examine psychological factors influencing risk-taking among minors, or assess the effectiveness of digital monitoring tools such as mobile-based reporting systems. Additional research on parental behavior models and socioeconomic variables may further deepen understanding of child traffic violations. Collaborative, interdisciplinary approaches involving criminology, education, behavioral sciences, and public policy will be vital in developing comprehensive solutions to enhance child safety and traffic governance in Indonesia.

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