The Perception of the People of Medan Towards the Police in Combating Mugging Crimes

Ramadhan Yoga Pamungkas

Communication Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, Sumatera Utara

ramadhanyogap@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research stems from the increasing problem of street crimes, particularly "begal" (armed robbery or motorcycle hijacking), which has claimed victims' lives in Medan City. The study aims to provide an overview of the public's perception of the police in combating begal crimes in Medan. The research employs a qualitative approach, with data collected through interviews with residents who are familiar with police performance in addressing begal cases, direct observation of related activities, and documentation of the interviews. The data analysis technique follows the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of three concurrent activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The study was conducted in Medan with six (6) informants residing in the city. The findings indicate that the perception of Medan residents regarding police performance in tackling begal crimes remains unsatisfactory. The main concerns include the infrequency of police patrols, limited collaboration with the community, and slow responses to public reports.

Keyword : Perception, society, crime, mugging.

1.   INTRODUCTION

Crime is not a new phenomenon in human life. Since the early stages of civilization, crime has been an inherent part of society, persisting even into the modern era despite advances in science and technology. This phenomenon shows that technological progress does not automatically eliminate criminal acts, particularly street crimes that continue to develop with increasingly complex patterns and methods.

In recent years, cases of violent crime in urban areas—especially street crimes such as robbery, theft with violence, and the phenomenon of motorcycle hijacking (begal)—have shown a significant increase. Motorcycle hijacking has become one of the most alarming forms of criminality because it not only causes material losses but also frequently claims lives. Police data indicate high rates of robbery, motor vehicle theft, and burglary in Medan City during the 2020–2023 period, with numerous tragic incidents involving victims ranging from ordinary citizens to university students.

Motorcycle hijacking cases in Medan that have gone viral in mass media and social media illustrate the severity of this threat to public security and order. Various incidents, from elderly victims to students, emphasize that begal is not merely an ordinary criminal act but also a form of violence with wide-ranging social, psychological, and legal impacts.

Based on this background, it is essential to examine more deeply the factors that drive the occurrence of motorcycle hijacking crimes and the strategies for addressing them. This study aims to analyze the dynamics of begal criminality in Medan City, understand its underlying causes, and review the preventive and enforcement efforts carried out by law enforcement agencies. Thus, this research is expected to contribute to the development of more effective strategies for combating urban crime.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Perception

Perception is defined as the process of receiving, organizing, and interpreting information obtained by individuals through the five senses, which then forms an understanding of an object (Anggianita et al., 2020). According to Kotler and Keller, consumer perception is the way an individual selects, organizes, and interprets information to create a meaningful picture, which does not solely depend on physical stimuli but also on the surrounding environmental context (Sari & Soliha, 2021). Toha, in the study of Sembiring & Oktavianti (2021), explains that the factors influencing perception consist of internal factors such as feelings, attitudes, values, motivation, as well as physical and psychological conditions and external factors, such as family background, obtained information, and social environment. Furthermore, Wekke emphasizes that a person's energy and

level of attention also affect the perceptual process, so that two individuals may interpret the same stimulus in different ways (Charjin et al., 2022). Thus, perception is a subjective process influenced by both internal and external factors, resulting in different views or judgments among individuals.

2.2 Community

Etymologically, the term "society" originates from the Latin word socius, meaning companion, and the Arabic word syaraka, which means to participate or to take part. Society is understood as a group of individuals living together with social interaction, social change, and a sense of togetherness. Karl Marx views society as a structure that constantly experiences tension due to conflicts among groups with different economic backgrounds (Kambali, 2020). In other words, society is a dynamic social system in which both conflict and cooperation play an essential role in its development.

2.3 Crime

Crime is a social phenomenon that constantly exists within society, evolving alongside human life. It is influenced by political, economic, socio-cultural, and national security aspects. According to Hidayat et al. (2021), modernization and technological developments, such as the use of gadgets, while providing positive impacts, also contribute to the emergence of new forms of crime. From a criminological perspective, crime is viewed not merely as a matter of law enforcement but also as an object of scientific study (pure science), the findings of which can be utilized to understand and address deviant behavior (Edrisy et al., 2023)

2.4 Begal

The phenomenon of begal is regarded as a form of moral degradation within society. The younger generation, who should ideally serve as agents of positive change, instead become trapped in criminal acts, including violence and begal activities. According to Hardiyanto et al. (2023), strengthening character through campaigns of tolerance and religious moderation is crucial to prevent deviant behavior. However, the growing moral crisis—marked by the rise of bullying, corruption, student violence, and begal—demonstrates the weakness of character education within families, schools, and society at large. Al Fikry (2021) emphasizes that character education from an early age is the key to preventing the development of anarchic behavior, deceitful acts, and criminality among the younger generation.

2.5 Basic Assumptions

According to Manasse Malo, research assumptions are fundamental beliefs held to be true and serve as the starting point for researchers in conducting their studies (Ridhahani, 2022). The basic assumptions of this research include: (a) the high incidence of begal crimes on the streets that endanger the community, (b) the prevalence of begal crimes occurring at night, and (c) the necessity of patrols in areas prone to begal activities.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Type of Research

This study employs a qualitative method with a descriptive qualitative type. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of social phenomena in natural settings, where the researcher serves as the key instrument. The selection of informants was conducted using purposive sampling, based on specific considerations relevant to the research objectives. Qualitative research places greater emphasis on meaning rather than generalization (Haryono, 2023).

3.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research refers to Davis' perspective, which identifies the indicators of cooperation as responsibility, communication, and contribution. Accordingly, the collaboration between the Medan City Government and the Medan Metropolitan Police (Polrestabes Medan) in combating street crime (begal) is analyzed based on these three indicators (Silalahi, 2022). Supporting and inhibiting factors of the cooperation are also taken into account as part of the analytical framework.

3.3 Concept Definition

The conceptual definition of this research is "public perception of begal crime." Perception is understood as the process by which an individual receives and interprets information from the environment through the five senses in order to form a response to an object (Azizi et al., 2022).

3.4 Research Categorisation

To measure the research variables, the following indicators were used: public perception of the police's performance in combating robbery, including attitudes, prejudices, expectations, and intensity.

3.5 Resource Person

The sources for this research were residents of Medan who were aware of mugging activities. Purposive sampling was used, with specific characteristics of respondents being set in accordance with the research objectives.

3.6 Data Collection Techniques

Data was collected through three main techniques:

1. Observation, which is the direct observation of research objects to record behaviours and phenomena related to public perceptions of the police.

2. Interviews, namely in-depth discussions with the community regarding their satisfaction with the police's performance in combating robbery.
3. Documentation, namely the examination of written materials or archives such as regulations, media reports, and documents related to criminal acts of robbery in Medan.

3.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis using the Miles and Huberman model (Kase et al., 2023) which includes three main stages:

1. Data reduction, namely the selection and simplification of data from field notes.
2. Data Presentation, in the form of systematic narrative data compilation to facilitate conclusion drawing.
3. Drawing Conclusions/Verification, which is the process of interpreting data and verifying findings to ensure they are valid and accountable.

3.8. Research Time and Location

The research was conducted in Medan City from March to May 2024. This location was chosen because of the high rate of mugging crimes, which caused public unrest, making it relevant to the focus of the research.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

Identity of the Narrator

This study involved six informants living in areas prone to mugging in the city of Medan. The identities of the respondents can be seen in Table 1.

Tabel 1. Research Source Identity

No.	Nama	Pekerjaan	Umur	Alamat
1	Iwan	Entrepreneur	43	Jl. Jawa, Sei Sikambing, Kec. Medan Helvetia
2	Wati	Trader	52	Jl. Gatot Subroto, Sei Sikambing, Kota Medan
3	Naeya Aprilia Sundari	Student	20	Jl. Karya Bakti, Pangkalan Masyhur, Kec. Medan Johor
4	Vinelius	Headmaster	32	Jl. Karya Bakti, Pangkalan Masyhur, Kec. Medan Johor
5	Risky	Engineer	23	Jl. Patriot, Lalang, Kec. Medan Sunggal
6	Eva	Housewife	41	Jl. Brigjen Katamso, Kampung Baru, Kec. Medan Maimun

Public Perception of Police Performance

Based on the interview results, there are different patterns regarding public satisfaction with police performance.

1. **Satisfaction and Security**
   - Some community members (Iwan, Vinelius) expressed satisfaction as motorcycle mugging cases have become relatively rare. They perceived the police as being proactive through raids and patrols when cases escalated.
   - However, other informants (Eva, Risky, Wati, Naeya) considered the police less assertive, acting only when incidents became widespread.

2. **Proactive vs. Reactive**
   - Iwan and Vinelius believed that the police tend to be proactive.
   - Risky and Wati described the police as reactive, responding only after public pressure or once victims had fallen.
   - Eva and Naeya observed the police performance as inconsistent, sometimes responsive and at other times slow.

3. **Perceptions of Police Capability**
   - Some informants (Naeya, Vinelius) expressed confidence in the police's ability to eradicate motorcycle mugging.
   - Others (Risky, Wati, Eva) held negative perceptions, noting that many perpetrators were still at large.

4. **Coordination and Cooperation**
   - Iwan and Vinelius noted efforts of cooperation between the police and the community or local municipal police (Satpol-PP).
   - In contrast, Eva, Risky, Naeya, and Wati perceived coordination as low, with the police rarely engaging directly with the community.

5. **Community Expectations**
- All informants agreed on the need for increased patrols, particularly during vulnerable hours at night until early morning.
- There were demands for the police to impose stricter punishments to deter offenders (Eva, Wati).
- The community also hoped to carry out daily activities without fear, both during the day and at night (Vinelius, Iwan).

4.2 Discussion

Based on the results of interview data regarding the Public Perception of the Medan Community Toward the Police in Combating Motorcycle Mugging Crimes, the discussion is categorized as follows:

4.2.1 Persepsi Masyarakat Terhadap Kinerja Kepolisian

According to Giffin, trust is an essential component in maintaining interpersonal relationships. Scientifically, trust is defined as reliance on the behavior of others to achieve desired goals, the attainment of which is uncertain and occurs in risky situations (Silvia, 2023). Meanwhile, Budi Winarno explains that public perception represents the responses or knowledge of a group of individuals integrated with cultural values and traditions that continue to exist within a state. In general, the term policy is used to refer to the behavior of an actor, such as an official, a group, or a governmental institution, or a number of actors engaged in a particular field of activity (Winarno et al., 2024).

The community's dissatisfaction with the police performance in addressing motorcycle mugging crimes (begal) in Medan reflects distrust and disappointment regarding the police response and effectiveness in handling security issues. Many residents feel that the police's efforts have been insufficient to overcome the recurring cases of begal in the city.

One of the main reasons for this dissatisfaction is the persistently high rate of begal incidents. Although the police have carried out preventive and enforcement measures, the number of reported cases has not shown a significant decline. In fact, according to the people of Medan, recent decreases in begal cases seem temporary and insignificant, largely due to the lack of patrols and police supervision.

Furthermore, residents feel that the police response to begal reports is often neither prompt nor effective. Many reports suggest that the police fail to arrive quickly at the scene or do not provide satisfactory follow-up to cases reported by the community.

This dissatisfaction highlights the urgent need for improvements and enhancements in law enforcement and crime prevention efforts against begal. Collaboration between the government, the community, and the police is essential to establish a safe and secure environment for all residents in Medan.

4.2.2 Begal

According to the England & West Theft Act, an individual can be categorized as a perpetrator of robbery (begal) when the act of theft or appropriation is committed by using force or threats of violence against the victim, intended to instill fear and pressure (Hidayani & Munthe, 2023). In the Indonesian Penal Code (KUHP), robbery or pembegalan is classified as a criminal act (theft) regulated under Article 365 of the KUHP. It is categorized as gequalificeerde diefstal or aggravated theft, meaning a theft with qualifying or aggravating circumstances. Thus, what is regulated under Article 365 of the KUHP essentially constitutes a single crime—aggravated theft—rather than two separate offenses of theft and violence.

Robbery (begal) is one of the serious problems faced by the city of Medan. Such incidents often occur suddenly, heightening insecurity in the area. Perpetrators typically act swiftly, using violence or threats to seize victims' valuables such as money, jewelry, electronic devices, and motor vehicles. In Medan, begal cases frequently occur in vulnerable locations, such as isolated streets, alleyways, or major roads with insufficient lighting.

One of the main challenges in addressing robbery crimes in Medan is the continuous rise in reported cases. Despite law enforcement efforts and police patrols, the number of incidents remains relatively high. This persistent threat has raised significant concerns among the public and demonstrates that robbery remains a major challenge to public safety in Medan.

Moreover, there are specific socioeconomic factors that contribute to the prevalence of robbery in the city, such as high unemployment, poverty, and social inequality. Unstable socioeconomic conditions can drive individuals to resort to illegal means, including robbery, as a way to fulfill their basic needs.

Efforts to combat robbery in Medan require collaboration between the police, local government, and the community. Effective preventive measures—such as increasing security patrols, raising public awareness of crime risks, and improving access to employment and education—can help reduce the incidence of robbery. Through strong cooperation and collective efforts among all stakeholders, it is hoped that Medan can develop into a safer and more secure environment for its residents.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings obtained from interviews with six (6) informants regarding "The Public Perception of Medan City Residents Toward Police Performance in Combating Robbery (Begal) Crimes," the researcher

draws the following conclusions: The results indicate that the people of Medan City are generally satisfied with the efforts undertaken by the local police in addressing begal crimes. The Medan City Police have been equipped with enhanced patrol facilities, including 12 double-cabin pioneer patrol cars fitted with advanced features. These improvements, coupled with strict law enforcement measures, have contributed to a noticeable decline in begal incidents. This decline cannot be separated from the collaborative efforts between the community, the government, and the police in maintaining neighborhood security, as well as the firm actions taken by the police in accordance with Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) against perpetrators of begal crimes.

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