

Citizens' Attitudes Toward The Police

*Feren Eki Putri*¹, *Suryani*², *Salma Nabillah*³, *Firman Widya Putra*⁴, *Bayu Satrio Utomo*⁵,
*Raesma Elfryda Maheindry*⁶, *Deajeng Wahyu Nur*⁷

Fakultas Psikologi dan Kesehatan, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya; Jl.
Ahmad Yani No.117, Surabaya, Jawa Timur 602111
e-mail: fereneki0@gmail.com

Abstract. *The purpose of this study was to describe citizens attitudes toward the police. There were 101 respondents in Surabaya were involved and analyzed based on gender, age, education, and experience as a demographic variables. This quantitative research used descriptive and comparative survey methods. Attitudes Toward Police instrument which consists of seven items were used. Data was analyzed using Independent Sample-T Test. The results showed that there were no differences between men and women in attitudes toward the police. This study also shows that respondents with early adulthood, higher education, and never interact with the police show more positive attitude compared to respondents in their teens, high school education, and have interaction with the police.*

Keywords: *Attitudes, Police, Society*

Abstrak. Riset ini bertujuan untuk memberikan gambaran mengenai sikap masyarakat terhadap polisi. Responden yang berpartisipasi pada studi ini sejumlah 101 masyarakat Surabaya dan dianalisis berdasarkan empat variabel demografis yaitu gender, usia, pendidikan, pengalaman. Penelitian kuantitatif ini menggunakan survei deskriptif dan komparatif. Alat ukur yang digunakan adalah instrument *Attitude Toward Police* yang terdiri dari tujuh aitem. Analisis data dilakukan dengan metode Independent Sample-T Test. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa tidak ada perbedaan sikap yang signifikan terhadap polisi antara laki-laki dengan perempuan. Penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa responden dengan usia dewasa awal, Pendidikan perguruan tinggi, dan tidak pernah berinteraksi dengan polisi memiliki sikap yang lebih positif dibandingkan dengan responden usia remaja, Pendidikan SMA, dan pernah berinteraksi dengan polisi.

Kata kunci. Sikap, Polisi, Masyarakat

Citizens' attitudes towards the police have been an important issue among legal practitioners, policymakers, and researchers since the 1960s. A lot of researchers have been exploring how citizens perceive the police since frequent conflicts occurred between the police and

society (Taylor, Turner, Esbensen, & Winfree Jr., 2001).

Conflicts between the police and society which have been occurred several times become a focus of media. One of the current conflicts between the police and university students was reported by

CNNIndonesia (2019) in which students from several universities rejected the Revised Draft of Criminal Code and the Corruption Eradication Law. The clash was chaotic due to students' resistance and police actions to overcome the situation. Since the police used repressive action several times to regulate the demonstrators, it caused various reactions from society.

The news about the police institution is not always filled with negative news. The police's achievements in dealing with various problems in society have also been reported. This affects how people perceive and behave toward the police. Sarlito and Eko (2009) described the attitude as a process of measurement and assessment toward objects, information, and humans. The assessment resulted in both positive and negative attitudes in which positive attitudes expressed through favorable attitudes while negative ones in an unfavorable attitude (Azwar, 2013).

Citizens' attitudes towards the police can be measured through the Attitude Towards Police (ATP) instrument. These instruments cover perceptions about police performance, beliefs about police behavior, assessment of police characteristics, and community preferences for police duties (Webb &

Marshall, 1995). ATP results showed that citizens' attitudes range from positive and negative continuum. A positive attitude reflected on cooperation while negative attitudes were on uncooperative attitude (Rusinko, Johnson, & Hornung, 1978).

Attitudes toward the police are a reflection of citizens' perceptions about government like the judicial system so that ATP can measure public trust in government institutions (Albrecht & Green, 1977). Over the last few decades, some variables affecting citizens' attitudes towards the police have been explored. Those variables are interactions with the police, the duration when the police respond to public complaints, and demographic factors such as race, income, gender, and age (Erez, 1984; Toch & Maguire, 2014). Many studies have been conducted to compare those variables and one of them is gender which is also called affecting the citizen's attitudes.

Some studies showed women are more positive towards the police than men (Brandl, Frank, Worden, & Bynum, 1994; Cao, Frank, & Cullen, 1996; Percy, 1980). Gender is found to be one of variable which had a significant correlation with someone's attitudes toward the police (Correia, 2010; Sims, Hooper, & Peterson, 2002; Sun, Su, & Wu, 2011). However, Griffiths & Winfree (1982) argued that

there were no different attitudes between women and men towards the police. The gender is still questionable whether it is a significant variable in ATP. Since there was inconsistency in the research results, it is necessary to continue researching the variable of gender.

Previous researches also considered the age in comparing attitudes towards the police (Correia, 2010; Scaglione, R., & Condon, 1980). They found that young people tend to have negative attitudes towards the police compared to older people. There are also several researches found that age has a consistent impact to the someone's attitudes toward police (McCarty, Zhao, & Garland, 2007; Scheider, Rowell, & Bezdikian, 2003). Besides, education and experience having interaction with the police also found various results. Bayley & Mendelshon (1969) found that there was no correlation in citizens' education level and their attitude toward the police. However, Frank, Smith, & Novak (2005) and Sims et al. (2002) found that the level of education affects the attitude towards the police. Low-level education will lead to a negative attitude towards the police. Same result was discovered by Hilal, Densley, & Zhao (2013), that the level of someone's education contributes to

shaping opinions and perceptions to the police.

Several studies also found that both good and bad experiences correlate with attitudes toward the police (Bayley, D. H. & Mendelshon, 1969; Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 2008). Griffiths & Winfree, (1982) argued that having unpleasant experiences interacting with police correlated with negative attitudes towards the police in the future. Also, the more experience had to interact with the police, the more negative attitude is shown (Hawdon & Ryan, 2003; Schack & Frank, 1978).

Citizens' attitudes towards the police can give inform the police about their performance. They can apply the information to assess accountability and public trust to the police (Moore, 1992). Several studies have also revealed that some police personalities might affect citizens' attitudes. When their expectations are not fulfilled, then negative stereotypes arise against the police (Laguna, Linn, Ward, & Rupslaukyte, 2010).

One of the personality trait attached in the police is authoritarian which make them having power, prejudice, and even violence (Jones, 1984). However, Mills & Bohannon (1980) found that authoritarian is not always had by the police since they are also friendly,

assertive, independent, fair, and responsible.

There will be some benefits knowing citizens' attitudes toward the police. Good interaction with the police will make society have satisfaction so that they will be "eyes and ears" of the police. Society together with the police will maintain public security and improve the quality of life in society. Besides, the police will also get useful information to improve their performance and increase positive attitudes among the citizens. altitude more positively.

Besides, the more aware the police about citizens roles as information resources and evaluator, the more alert they are in strengthening or reviewing some policies had (Frank et al., 2005).

Society will not only help the police but also do cooperate when they have a positive perception about the police (Decker, 1981). The police service obtained will build perception on society whether the police can solve the problem and stop the crime (Tyler, 1990). These perceptions will influence citizens attitudes towards the police.

Method

This quantitative research used a descriptive and comparative survey to provide an overview of the population studied (Kriyantono, 2009). Data were

obtained from a sample to get representative a result.

There are 101 Surabaya citizens which consist of teenagers and adolescents who participated in this study. This study explores some demographic variables which are gender, age, experience, and education. Data was collected by distributing the Attitude Toward Police instrument which was adapted from Webb & Marshall (1995). Then, the Independent Sample-T Test was used to analyze the data.

Result

Each demographic variable will be described based on the result of data analysis.

a. Gender

Descriptive analysis of the gender variable showed that there are 33 males and 68 females involved in this study.

Table 1.
Frequencies and Means of Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Males	33	16.6970	4.83790
Females	68	17.3824	3.78145

Table 1 showed that there is a different mean between males and females. The mean of male was 16.6970 with a standard deviation of 4.838, while the mean of females was 17.382 with a standard deviation of 3,781. Next, the result of the Independent Sample-T Test

for gender variables will be presented on the following table.

Table 2.
Simple Independent T-Test

t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
-.778	.438	-.68538
-.715	.478	-.68538

Table 2 showed that the significance value (2-tailed) was $0.438 > 0.05$, which means that there were no significant differences between males and females. Besides, the mean difference is -0.68538 .

b. Age

There are 29 teenagers (13-20 years old) and 72 adolescents (20-27 years) as subjects in this study.

Tabel 3.
Frequencies and Mean of Age

Age	N	Std. Deviation
Adolescent	72	3.33330
Teenager	29	3.72847

Table 4 showed that significance values were $0.513 > 0.05$ which means the data was homogenous. Sig. (2-tailed) was $0.000 < 0.05$ means that there was a significant difference between teenagers and adolescence. The means difference was 5.10776 .

Tabel 4.
Independent Sample-T Test of Age

Sig.	T	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
.513	6.732	.000	5.10776
	6.416	.000	5.10776

c. Education

There are 76 subjects graduated from senior high school and 25 subjects graduated from the university level.

Tabel 5.
Frequencies and Mean of Education

Education	N	Std. Deviation
Senior High School	76	3.96086
University	25	3.32265

Table 6 showed significant values $0.087 > 0.05$ means that the data was homogenous. Significance (2-tailed) $0.000 < 0.05$ explaining that there was a significant difference between subjects who graduated from senior high school and those who graduated from university. The mean difference was -3.82947 .

Tabel 6.
Independent Sample-T Test of education

Sig.	T	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
.087	-4.353	.000	-3.82947
	-4.757	.000	-3.82947

d. Experiences

There is 79 subject having interaction with the police and 22 never have interaction with the police.

Table 7.
Frequencies and Mean of Experiences

Experiences	N	Std. Deviation
Have experiences	79	4.13191
No experiences	22	3.40391

Table 8 showed significancy values is $0.204 > 0.05$ means that the data is homogen. Besides, significancy values $0.003 < 0.05$ explained that there was a

significant differences Mean differences is -2.87745.

Table 8.
Independent Sample-T Test Experiences

Sig.	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
.204	-2.993	.003	-2.87745
	-3.339	.002	-2.87745

Data about attitudes toward the police was categorized in table 9.

Tabel 9.
Positive attitudes toward the police

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Low	18	17.8
Middle	33	32.7
High	50	49.5
Total	101	100.0

Table 9 showed that there are 18 subjects (17.8%) with low ATP, 33 subjects (32.7%), having middle ATP, and 50 subjects (49.5%) in the high category.

Discussion

Results showed that attitudes toward the police are various among the citizens in Surabaya. Demographic variables analyzed are gender, age, education level, and experience. There is no significant difference in attitudes towards the police between males and females. However, there were significant differences in age, education, and experience.

It was found that there was a no different attitude toward the police between males and females. This finding was consistent with Boggs, S. L. & Galliher (1975) saying no difference in

attitudes toward the police between males and females. Both males and females have the same perception toward the police was considered as the reason to support this finding. The perception was defined as a process of assessing, evaluating, and interpreting information through the senses (Suharman, 2005). The perceptual process was begun with the stimulus, registration, and interpretation (Miftah, 2003).

There are internal and external factors affecting perception (Miftah, 2003). Internal factors are prejudice, expectations, attention, and motivation while external factors are intensity and repetition of the getting information. Referring to those definitions and affecting factors, it is called that males and females don't have different attitudes toward the police. Since they positively assess police services to society, then they have positive attitudes towards the police. Literature shows that males tend to have less trust in the police since they are often involved in various activities with the police (Mbuba, 2010).

Besides, it was found that the age, as the second demographic variable analyzed has significant differences. It was called that there was a different attitude between teenagers and adolescents. Previous studies also stated that adolescence has a more positive attitude

towards police compared to teenagers (Correia, 2010; Jesilow, P. & Namazzi, 1995; Toch & Maguire, 2014). Teenagers were considered to have more negative attitudes towards the police than older groups (Brandl et al., 1994; Hawdon & Ryan, 2003; Scaglione, R., & Condon, 1980)

Since teenagers frequently interact with the police, so that they have a less supportive attitude towards the police. Teenagers were considered to have a greater chance of direct interaction with the police and detained because of juvenile delinquency (Snyder, Sickmund, & Poe-Yamagata, 1996). The police often have direct interaction when giving counseling related to delinquency.

Besides, the result also found that there were differences between groups who have ever interacted with the police and those who had never. However, these results do not reveal the type of experience whether it is negative or positive. Therefore, further research can be conducted to gain a type of experience affecting the attitude towards the police.

Previous studies having "experience with police " showed various results since it depends on the kind of experience had (Jennings et al., 2008; Sun et al., 2011). However, this study found that experience affects the attitudes toward

the police. Besides, society expectation was also assumed effecting ATP. The expectation theory explained that the individual will have certain attitudes based on their expectations (Vroom, 1964). If the society has high expectations for the police in handling crime but the police fail to solve it, it will affect their attitudes towards the police (Rosenbaum, Schuck, Costello, Hawkins, & Ring, 2005).

The final demographic variable analyzed was education. It was found that there were differences between senior high school groups and university groups. These results are in line with several researches finding that education can affect attitude towards the police (Hilal et al., 2013; Jesilow, P. & Namazzi, 1995; Sims et al., 2002). Schemes, cognitive structures to compile knowledge and adapt to their environment were assumed different between those two groups (Piaget, 1983). Groups with high school background have limited schemes since knowledge and experience dealing with the police is still less than adolescence. In contrast, those from the university level have more information, knowledge, and experience so that they have more positive attitudes toward the police.

Conclusion

It was concluded that there was a no different attitude toward the police

across gender. However, teenagers and adolescents have a different attitude in which adolescence is more supportive than teenagers.

Experience of having interaction with the police also make a different attitude. At last, attitude toward the police also different between the groups with the educational background. it is suggested that further research involved more subjects with different variables such as income, ethnicity, a period of staying, and elaborate both pleasant or unpleasant experiences with police.

Since the study about the attitude toward the police in Indonesia is still a few in number, so that further research is still needed to get different results and phenomena compared to other countries.

Reference

- Albrecht, S. L., & Green, M. (1977). Attitudes Toward The Police And The Larger Attitude Complex: Implications for Police-Community Relationships. *Criminology*, 15(1), 67–86.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1977.tb00049.x>
- Azwar, S. (2013). *Sikap Manusia : Teori dan Pengukurannya*. Yogyakarta:

Pustaka Pelajar.

- Bayley, D. H. & Mendelshon, H. (1969). *Minorities and The Police*. New York: Free Press.
- Boggs, S. L. & Galliher, S. F. (1975). Evaluating The Police: A Comparison of Black Street and Household Respondents. *Social Problems*, 13, 393–406.
- Brandl, S. G., Frank, J., Worden, R. E., & Bynum, T. S. (1994). Global, and specific attitudes toward the police: Disentangling the relationship. *Justice Quarterly*, 11(1), 119–134.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0741882940092161>
- Cao, L., Frank, J., & Cullen, F. T. (1996). Race, community context and confidence in the police. *American Journal of Police*, 15(1), 3–22.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/07358549610116536>
- CNNIndonesia. (2019). Mahasiswa dan Polisi Bentrok saat Demo di DPRD Sumsel. Retrieved from

- <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20190924151400-20-433419/mahasiswa-dan-polisi-bentrok-saat-demo-di-dprd-sumsel>
- Correia, M. E. (2010). Determinants of Attitudes Toward Police of Latino Immigrants and Non-Immigrants. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 38, 99–107.
- Decker, S. H. (1981). Citizens Attitude Toward The Police. *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, 9, 81–87.
- Erez, E. (1984). Self-Defined “Desert” and Citizens’ Assessment of the Police. *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology (1973-)*, 75(4), 1276. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1143386>
- Frank, J., Smith, B. W., & Novak, K. J. (2005). Exploring the Basis of Citizens’ Attitudes Toward the Police. *Police Quarterly*, 8(2), 206–228. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098611103258955>
- Griffiths, C. T., & Winfree, L. T. (1982). Attitudes Toward the Police: A Comparison of Canadian and American Adolescents. *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*, 6(1–2), 127–141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01924036.1982.9688748>
- Hawdon, J., & Ryan, J. (2003). Police-resident interactions and satisfaction with police: An empirical test of community policing assertions. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 14, 55–74.
- Hilal, S., Densley, J., & Zhao, R. (2013). Cops in College: Police Officers’ Perceptions on Formal Education. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 24(4), 461–477. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2013.791332>
- Jennings, K. M., Stoker, L., & Bowers, J. (2008). Politics Across Generations: Family Transmission Reexamined. *The Journal of Politics*, 71, 782–789.
- Jesilow, P. & Namazzi, N. (1995). Public

- Attitudes Toward The Police. *American Journal of Police*, 14, 67–89.
- Kriyantono, R. (2009). *Teknik Praktis Riset Komunikasi*. Malang: Prenada Media Group.
- Laguna, L., Linn, A., Ward, K., & Rupslaukyte, R. (2010). An Examination of Authoritarian Personality Traits among Police Officers: The Role of Experience. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 25(2), 99–104. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-009-9060-0>
- Mbuba, J. M. (2010). Attitudes Toward the Police: The significance of race and other factors among college students. *Journal of Ethnicity in Criminal Justice*, 8(3), 201–215. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377938.2010.502846>
- McCarty, W. P., Zhao, J., & Garland, B. E. (2007). Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management Article information : In *Occupational stress and burnout between male and female police officers: Are there any gender differences?* (Vol. 30). <https://doi.org/10.1108/13639510210450631>
- Miftah, T. (2003). *Perilaku Organisasi Konsep Dasar dan Aplikasinya*. Jakarta: PT. Raya Grafindo.
- Mills, C. J., & Bohannon, W. E. (1980). Personality characteristics of effective state police officers. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 65(6), 680–684. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.65.6.680>
- Moore, M. (1992). *Problem solving and community policing*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Percy, S. L. (1980). Response Time and Citizen Evaluation of Police. *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, 8, 75–86.
- Piaget, J. (1983). *Piaget Theory of Cognitive Development* (4th editio).

- New York: Wiley.
- Rosenbaum, D. P., Schuck, A. M., Costello, S. K., Hawkins, D. F., & Ring, M. K. (2005). Attitudes Toward the Police: The Effects of Direct and Vicarious Experience. *Police Quarterly*, 8(3), 343–365. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098611104271085>
- Rusinko, W. T., Johnson, K. W., & Hornung, C. A. (1978). The importance of police contact in the formulation of youths' attitudes toward police. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 6(1), 53–67. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0047-2352\(78\)90039-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/0047-2352(78)90039-9)
- Sarlito, S. & Eko, M. (2009). *Psikologi Sosial*. Jakarta: Salemba Humanika.
- Scaglion, R., & Condon, R. G. (1980). Determinants of Attitudes Toward City Police. *Criminology*, 17, 485–494.
- Schack, S., & Frank, R. S. (1978). Police Service Delivery to the Elderly. *ANNALS*, 438(1), 81–95.
- Scheider, M. C., Rowell, T., & Bezdikian, V. (2003). The Impact of Citizen Perceptions of Community Policing on Fear of Crime. *Police Quarterly*, 3, 363–386.
- Sims, B., Hooper, M., & Peterson, S. A. (2002). Determinants of citizens' attitudes toward police: Results of the Harrisburg Citizen Survey – 1999. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 25(3), 457–471. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13639510210436998>
- Snyder, H. N., Sickmund, M., & Poe-Yamagata, E. (1996). *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1996 Update on Violence*. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Suharman. (2005). *Psikologi Kognitif*. Surabaya: Srikandi.
- Sun, I. Y., Su, M., & Wu, Y. (2011). Attitudes toward police response to

- domestic violence: A comparison of chinese and American college students. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 26(16), 3289–3315. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260510393008>
- Taylor, T. J., Turner, K. B., Esbensen, F.-A., & Winfree Jr., L. T. (2001). Copping' an attitude: Attitudinal differences among juveniles toward police. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 29(4), 295–305. [https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0047-2352\(01\)00089-7](https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0047-2352(01)00089-7)
- Toch, H., & Maguire, K. (2014). Public Opinion Regarding Crime, Criminal Justice, and Related Topics: A Retrospect. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 51(4), 424–444. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427813520444>
- Tyler, T. (1990). *Why People Obey The Law*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Vroom, V. H. (1964). *Work and Motivation*. New York: Wiley.
- Webb, V. J., & Marshall, C. E. (1995). The relative importance of race and ethnicity on citizen attitudes toward the police. *American Journal of Police*, 14(2), 45–66. <https://doi.org/10.1108/07358549510102749>