

Research Article

The Role of Law in Dealing Psychological Conflict Due to Breakup

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Abstract: Breakups often trigger psychological conflict ranging from stress, anxiety, depression, to risky behavior that have an impact on individual well-being and the social environment. This study explores the role of law in preventing, responding to, and recovering such psychological impacts through an interdisciplinary approach. The methodology used is a normative-juridical study combined with a literature review of clinical psychology and mental health policy. The findings show that the legal framework can function on three levels: (1) preventive, through the guarantee of the right to mental health, digital literacy, and platform governance to prevent post-breakup online harassment; (2) protective, through victim protection mechanisms against psychological violence, stalking, doxing, and the dissemination of non-consensual intimate content; and (3) curative, with a referral scheme for counseling services, the provision of legal aid, data confidentiality guarantees, and restorative justice instruments centered on victim recovery. However, there are implementation gaps, including the lack of standardization of psychological assessments in the legal process, limited access to services at the grassroots level, and coordination between institutions that are not optimal. This article recommends the integration of mental health protocols in the law enforcement process, evidentiary guidelines for psychological violence, as well as cross-sectoral collaboration with psychological service providers and digital platforms. The main contribution of this study is the mapping of a comprehensive legal intervention framework for post-breakup psychological conflicts.

Keywords: Digital Literacy; Mental Health; Psychological Recovery; Stalking; Victim Protection

1. Introduction

A breakup is a significant emotional experience and can affect an individual's psychological well-being. Research shows that separation can lead to psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the individuals involved (Amato, 2000; Hewitt & Turrell, 2011). These psychological impacts often affect an individual's quality of life and social functioning. Therefore, it is important to understand how the legal system can play a role in dealing with the psychological impact of a breakup. This phenomenon is not only theoretical, but it is also reflected in real-life cases that show the extreme consequences of a breakup for the mental health of individuals.

In 2023, two suicide cases involving the breakup factor were in the spotlight of the media in Indonesia. On July 25, 2023, a 32-year-old man in Purwokerto, Central Java, was found hanging himself in his rented house. Before the incident, he went live on Instagram, showing that he ended his life due to a breakup. A few months later, on December 30, 2023, a 19-year-old man in Wonosari, Malang Regency, was also found dead hanging himself behind his house. Based on a recent conversation with his girlfriend, it is suspected that he was depressed due to a breakup in a romantic relationship. These cases highlight the importance of attention to an individual's mental health, especially in a relationship that ends.

Several previous studies have highlighted the link between breakups, psychological health, and legal interventions. Amato (2000) found that separation can lead to significant psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety, but his study was demographic and lacked relevant legal interventions. Hewitt & Turrell (2011) emphasized the influence of relationship quality on individual psychological well-being, but this study has not linked such psychological outcomes to legal mechanisms that can support emotional recovery.

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Furthermore, Bailey et al. (2020) explore the integration of psychology in the legal system, including the application of the principles of therapeutic jurisprudence, but their research is conceptual outside the Indonesian context. From these three studies, it can be seen that there is a research gap related to the application of laws that are sensitive to emotional trauma due to breakups in the local context of Indonesia, so studies that examine the practical role of law in dealing with the psychological impact of separation are still very necessary.

Traditional legal systems generally focus on objective and material aspects of conflict, such as the division of property or child custody. However, there is a growing need to integrate psychological approaches in legal processes, especially in cases involving deep emotional conflicts (Bailey et al., 2020). This integration can include a psychological evaluation of the individual involved in the legal process to understand the emotional and psychological impact of the separation.

A trauma-sensitive, psychologically-based approach to law can increase the effectiveness of dispute resolution and support an individual's emotional recovery. For example, the application of the principles of "therapeutic jurisprudence" can help create a more empathetic legal process and support psychological recovery (Wexler & Winick, 2012). In addition, legal interventions that consider psychological factors can reduce stress levels and increase individual satisfaction with the outcome of legal proceedings (Chandrakar et al., 2020).

In Das Sein's perspective, the real conditions experienced by individuals after a breakup show significant psychological pressure. Many individuals face depression, anxiety, or stress disorders that affect their quality of life and social interactions. This condition reflects the empirical reality that the current legal system rarely considers the emotional dimension in the resolution of romantic disputes or interpersonal conflicts. Meanwhile, Das Solon's perspective highlights how the law should play a role in dealing with psychological conflicts due to breakups. The law ideally not only emphasizes the procedural or material aspects, but also considers the psychological well-being of the individuals involved. The principle of therapeutic jurisprudence reflects Das Sollen by emphasizing the need for a humanist and sensitive legal approach to psychological trauma. Within this framework, the law is expected to be able to provide a settlement mechanism that supports emotional recovery, while upholding justice, so that the legal process is not only formally fair, but also substantive in psychosocial aspects.

In Indonesia, despite efforts to introduce a more humane legal approach, the integration between law and psychology in dealing with emotional conflicts due to breakups is still limited. Therefore, this study aims to explore the role of law in dealing with the psychological impact of breakups and identify best practices that can be adopted in the Indonesian legal system.

This research is expected to provide new insights into the importance of integration between law and psychology in dealing with emotional conflicts due to breakups. By understanding the role of law in this regard, it is hoped that legal policies and practices can be developed that are more sensitive to the psychological aspects of the individual, so that the legal process is not only procedurally fair but also supports the emotional recovery of the individuals involved

2. Literature Review

Law in the sociological sense not only functions as a normative device that regulates relationships between individuals in society, but also as an instrument that arranges the balance between social and psychological aspects of human beings. The theory of the role of law emphasizes that law exists to protect, regulate, and maintain the balance of the public interest. In the context of psychological conflict due to a breakup, law can be understood as an external mechanism that provides structure, direction, and legitimacy to the behavior of individuals who experience inner pressure. Breakups are not just a personal problem, but can have social implications, ranging from depression, violence, to criminal acts that affect public order. Thus, law plays a role not only in a repressive sense, but also in a preventive sense that is, to organize social relations so that the psychological conflict does not develop into a broader social problem.

According to the concept of status and role, each individual in society occupies a certain position that is accompanied by rights and obligations. When a person faces a breakup, he or she is actually experiencing a disruption in his position, both as a partner, community member, and citizen. Law, through internalized norms, provides a framework for individuals to reinterpret their position and role. For example, family law, laws on the protection of women and children, and laws related to domestic violence, provide normative limits on what can and cannot be done when a love relationship ends. Thus, the law acts as a transition guide so

that individuals do not lose their existential orientation when their social status changes due to a breakup.

Levinson in Soekanto emphasized that roles include norms that are attached to a person's position in society. In the context of psychological conflict after a breakup, legal norms can function as an ideal role that is a reference for behavior, an expected role that society expects, a perceived role that is understood by individuals, and an actual role that is actually carried out. For example, an individual who has been abandoned by his or her partner may feel that his or her right to love has been taken away (perceived role), but the law and society expect him to remain in control (expected role), and stipulate that there should be no acts of violating the rights of others such as stalking, threats, or violence (ideal role). The role of law here is to align the disparity between the perceived role of individuals with the actual role demanded by society in order to maintain social balance.

Philosophically, a breakup can be seen as an existential crisis in which the subject loses part of the meaning of his life. Law, by its objective and impersonal nature, provides a structure that holds man from being trapped in the subjectivity of pain itself. In other words, the law serves as a "pillar of rationality" in the midst of emotional irrationality. Law is not just a normative text, but a symbol of order that restores human existence within its social framework. This is where the role of law is ontological, because it keeps the individual within the broader horizon of humanity, not just in subjective adversity.

Criticism can be made that the law seems too rigid to reach the psychological dimension that is personal in nature. However, this is precisely where the law finds its functional meaning: it does not come in to "cure" mental wounds directly, but rather provides a normative device so that the psychological conflict does not develop into a destructive form towards oneself or others. For example, cases of suicide, persecution of ex-partners, or the dissemination of personal content after a breakup are real phenomena that confirm that psychological conflicts can transform into juridical problems. Therefore, the law is a fence that keeps the freedom of individuals in responding to suffering from turning into a threat to the rights of others and public order.

In addition, law can also be interpreted as a dialectical arena between subjective and objective interests. Individuals who experience a breakup carry subjective interests in the form of a desire to vent emotions, demand emotional justice, or even revenge. However, the community demands objective interests in the form of order, security, and social balance. Law acts as a mediator that transforms individual psychological conflicts into something that can be regulated within a rational framework. Thus, the law not only curbs, but also facilitates the transformation of personal suffering into broader social lessons.

3. Research Method

The method applied in this study is a literature study, which is a series of activities related to the method of collecting Literature data, reading and recording, and managing research materials (Cahyono, 2022). Various literary documents such as books, magazines, e-books, journals, online news, and articles that are suitable for reference and related to the problem or purpose of research. After collecting several journals and books related to the discussion material, then analyze the material through literature studies with the results of the analysis in the form of descriptive.

4. Results and Discussion

In the end, the role of law in dealing with psychological conflicts due to breakups confirms that law is not only an "enforcer of justice" in the formal sense, but also a guardian of humanity. It goes beyond its normative role to a philosophical function: keeping humans humane in the face of emotional downturn. By integrating position, role, and social expectations, the law helps individuals reorganize themselves in the midst of psychological storms. Thus, law not only operates in the public sphere, but also exists as a normative horizon that guides human beings from existential fragility to social civilization. Thus, research on the role of law in psychological conflicts due to breakups opens up a critical reflection space on how law not only regulates behavior, but also restores the meaning of human life in its social context.

Table 1. Analysis of the Role of Law in Handling Psychological Conflict Due to Breakup: Theoretical Perspectives, Implications, and Recommendations

Aspects of Legal Theory & Philosophy	Implications for Psychological Conflict Due to Breakup	Regulatory, Psychological, and Social Recommendations
Law as a protector and keeper of balance	A breakup can trigger depression, violence, or criminality that disturbs public order.	Regulation: Special rules are needed regarding cyber harassment after a breakup. Psychology: Free/affordable counseling services for individuals experiencing trauma. Social: Public education campaign about healthy breakup.
Status & Role (Position & Role)	A breakup changes a person's social status (e.g. from a partner to a free individual) so that it confuses his or her social role.	Regulation: Legal protection for victims of harassment/threats from ex-spouses. Psychology: A self-identity rebuilding program to help individuals rediscover their roles. Sosial: <i>Dukungan komunitas yang menerima individu dengan status barunya tanpa stigma.</i>
Role according to Levinson (Ideal, Expected, Perceived, Actual)	The mismatch between the role that the individual feels (wanting to maintain love) and the role that society expects (self-control) can cause inner conflict	Regulation: Restorative justice mechanism for cases of mild emotional conflict. Psychology: Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) to align role perceptions with reality. Social: A forum for discussion for teens and young adults about healthy relationships.
Law as a support for rationality in the midst of emotions	Individuals tend to get caught up in emotional irrationality, the law serves as an objective framework.	Regulations: Rules regarding stalking and revenge porn are strengthened. Psychology: Mindfulness-based emotion regulation training. Social: Increasing digital literacy to prevent misuse of technology.
Criticism of rigid laws vs preventive functions	The law does not heal the inner wound, but prevents it from developing into destructive acts (suicide, violence, etc.).	Regulation: Strict law enforcement against gender-based violence after a breakup. Psychology: An easily accessible psychological crisis hotline. Social: Family support as an emotional first responder.
Subjective-objective dialectics (individual vs society)	Individuals want to vent their emotions, but society demands order. Law becomes a mediator.	Regulation: Legal mediation for unmarried couple conflicts (non-litigation). Psychology: Group counseling to balance personal emotions with social norms. Social: Establishment of community-based support groups.
Law as a guardian of humanity	Breakup as an existential crisis; The law keeps individuals humane in the face of adversity.	Regulation: Integrative legal-psychological policy (cooperation between the police and counseling institutions). Psychology: An existential psychotherapy approach. Social: Self-empowerment programs to cultivate a new meaning in life.

Case example, R (23 years old, female, student) ended a 3-year dating relationship. After breaking up, R experienced insomnia, anhedonia, repeated crying, a drop in GPA, and intrusive thoughts. A's ex-girlfriend contacted non-stop, spread slander on social media, uploaded old photos of R, and threatened to "go to the boarding house". R was afraid to leave the room. R's parents are out of town. R reported to the local Police PPA Unit; The campus has counseling services but it is not clear about the SOP for legal reference.

Major legal and psychological issues in case R. Major psychological issues: symptoms of first episode depression (insomnia, anhedonia, decreased function), anxiety, and post-breakup distress prevalent in young adults; Risk factors include anxious attachment and non-adaptive coping strategies. [1–3] Legal issues: protection from relationship-based violence (including psychological violence/threats) and cyberviolence (doxing/dissemination of personal material, online bullying, digital stalking). Relevant Indonesian frameworks include Law 18/2014 on Mental Health for the right to psychosocial services and rehabilitation; Law 23/2004 PKDRT (can be relevant if the relationship meets the elements of household/household relationship); and Law 12/2022 TPKS for the protection and recovery of victims of sexual/gender-based violence, including the digital realm. In the cyber aspect, in addition to general criminal instruments, the practice of reference often touches the realm of the ITE Law and

its derivative regulations for the distribution of content containing insults/immorality/threats.

Legal basis for intervention and victim protection. Feasible juridical steps: (a) reporting to the police (PPA Unit) on suspicion of psychological threats/violence, cyber harassment, and/or defamation; (b) application for protection/determination of protection through the court (analogous to the protection mechanism in PKDRT) and access to victim recovery services as stipulated in Law 12/2022 TPKS (victim protection & recovery articles, psychological services, legal assistance); (c) the implementation of the right to mental health services and cross-sector referrals (Health Office, Psychiatric Hospitals/clinics, clinical psychologists) in accordance with Law 18/2014. If there is co-habitation/domestic relations, Law 23/2004 allows protection orders (including prohibitions of approaching/consequences of violations). The practice in Indonesia for similar cases also recognizes the use of the ITE Law regime for threat/doxing content, where proving electronic elements is important.

Appropriate psychological assessment for R. Starting from risk assessment (suicidal ideation, violence, stalking), core symptoms (duration, intensity), social-academic function, and comorbidities (anxiety/trauma). Use standardized instruments (PHQ-9/GAD-7) and DSM-5-TR-based clinical interviews. In the context of primary or campus services, the WHO mhGAP-IG framework guides screening and referral; for mild–moderate depression, structured psychotherapy (CBT, IPT) is recommended; if moderate–severe, the combination of pharmaco-psychotherapy is in accordance with NICE NG222. Research evidence shows post-breakup distress related to attachment styles and coping strategies, so the assessment must target attachment patterns, emotion regulation, and ex-monitoring behavior (checking/cyberstalking).

Intervention recommendations: (1) Legal & safety pathways: paralegal/advocate assistance for reporting; application for protection (prohibition of contacting/approaching), documentation of digital evidence; campus coordination for academic impact certificates and safe campus SOPs. (2) Clinical psychology: psychoeducation; CBT/IPT focuses on relational grief, cognitive restructuring, emotion regulation; sleep management; social support; when pharmacotherapy by a doctor is needed. (3) Techno-hygiene: privacy audits, restrictions on social media exposure, chronological records of cyber disturbances. (4) Therapeutic jurisprudence: use legal processes that minimize retraumatization (mentoring, referral of victim services, victim-friendly reporting options). (5) 6–12 weeks of monitoring with clinical indicators and adherence to protective decisions. This recommendation follows NICE NG222 (treatment stepped-care), WHO mhGAP-IG, as well as longitudinal evidence of the impact of breakup on mental health.

How to deal with post-breakup violence/doxing/cyber-stalking is Standard of practice: collect electronic evidence (screenshots with metadata, links, time), restrict contact (block, save evidence), reset account privacy, and report to platforms & police. Legally, use TPKS (electronic-based sexual violence if there is one), general criminal articles (threats), and ITE Law tools related to the distribution of content that violates the law. Clinically, interventions focused on distress caused by digital stalking (education, CBT-insomnia/anxiety, social support). The literature shows cyber-stalking and cyber-dating abuse increase post-rejection/breakup and correlate with psychological distress; Screening needs to ask about former monitoring and technology-based coercive control.

Indicators of success and evaluation of recovery R. Clinical indicators: decrease in PHQ-9/GAD-7 score $\geq 50\%$, restoration of academic function, normalization of sleep, decreased checking behavior, and improvement of social support. Legal indicators: judgment/determination of protection complied with, cessation of contact/threat, no new adverse uploads; In the event of a violation, documentation of evidence and further enforcement. The evaluation process follows the stepped-care principle (NICE), with a 4–6 week review; if no response, escalation (combination therapy/pharmacist, specialist referral). For the context of non-specialist/campus services, use the mhGAP-IG algorithm as well as the safe campus SOPs and local victim service networks.

Integrated Protocols (concise & campus-adoptable): 1) Safety triage (red flags, safety plans, emergency contacts). 2) Digital evidence documentation (format, timestamp, witness, simple chain of custody). 3) Legal referral (PPA unit/advocate; protection options). 4) Initial clinical assessment (PHQ-9, GAD-7, sleep scale; DSM-5-TR). 5) Therapy plan (CBT/IPT; psychoeducation; social support; 4–6 week review). 6) Campus coordination (temporary academic dispensation; internal no-contact order; classroom education). 7) Digital privacy audits (password reset, 2FA, report & block, visibility settings). 8) Monitoring & evaluation (clinical & legal indicators every 2–4 weeks).

5. Conclusions

This research shows that breakups not only have an impact on the emotional aspects of individuals, but can also cause serious psychological conflicts, such as depression, anxiety, insomnia, and impaired social functioning. In this context, the law acts as a protective instrument that guarantees the rights of victims to a sense of security, access to mental health services, and proper rehabilitation. Regulations such as the Mental Health Law, the Law on the Elimination of Domestic Violence, the Law on Sexual Violence, and the ITE Law function not only as a repressive tool, but also as a preventive and rehabilitative mechanism. Thus, the law can serve as a foundation for limiting post-breakup coercive behavior, protecting victims from gender-based and technology-based violence, and ensuring that the psychological recovery process runs systematically and integrated.

Furthermore, the results of the study show the urgency of an interdisciplinary approach that unites law, psychology, and social aspects. The role of law needs to be positioned within the framework of therapeutic jurisprudence, which is a law that does not only punish, but also cures. These efforts are only effective when supported by professional psychological services, responsive campus or community policies, and family and social environment support. With this synergy, the law can become an instrument that channels protection, justice, and social therapy for individuals who experience psychological conflicts due to a breakup.

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