

From Proportionality and Normative Principles to Performance in Anti-Littering Law: A Comparative Study of Malaysia, Singapore, England & Wales and Japan

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ABSTRACT

This paper undertakes a comparative legal analysis of anti-littering laws in Malaysia, Singapore, England and Wales, and Japan. The objective is to evaluate the adequacy of these regimes by integrating normative principles such as proportionality, cultural legitimacy, and policy effectiveness with empirical indicators of compliance, recidivism, and public satisfaction. Methodologically, the study adopts a doctrinal and socio-legal approach, examining statutory frameworks, including Malaysia's 2025 Amendment Act introducing community service orders; Singapore's Corrective Work Orders; England and Wales' fixed penalty notices under the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and Japan's strict fines under the Waste Management and Public Cleansing Law. The theoretical premise draws on deterrence theory, restorative justice, responsive regulation, and cultural norm theory to explain enforcement philosophies. The authors contend that deterrence-focused regimes secure high compliance but risk undermining proportionality and satisfaction, whereas hybrid restorative models more effectively reduce recidivism and foster civic responsibility. Adequacy of the law is maximised when deterrence is balanced with rehabilitation and culturally resonant enforcement.

Keywords: Anti-Littering Laws, Proportionality, Cultural Legitimacy, Policy Effectiveness, Restorative Justice, Responsive Regulation, Deterrence, Recidivism

INTRODUCTION

Littering refers to the improper disposal of waste in public or private spaces accessible to the public. It is often classified as a *public nuisance offence*, disrupting public order and community standards of living (The Edge Malaysia, 2025). As an *environmental harm*, litter contributes to pollution, urban flooding, and health hazards, underscoring the link between littering laws and environmental protection (Hasegawa, 2015a). The legal response to such illegal activities suggests fostering civic responsibility, in which the law aims to instil social norms of cleanliness and shared responsibility for public spaces (Quah, 2010). In many jurisdictions, littering is treated as a *strict liability offence*, in which intent is often irrelevant—what is significant is disposing of litter in unauthorised places (DEFRA, 2022). Such a notion suggests that littering is a *collective harm* that requires strong deterrence and proportionate enforcement (Ayres & Braithwaite, 1992; Zehr, 2002).

The extent of littering can be measured by the number of littering notices issued against the perpetrators. For instance, Malaysia intensified enforcement in 2026 under the Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Management Act. 6,680 notices of offence have been issued nationwide since January 2026, including 1,866 to foreigners and 15 to teenagers. Of these, 289 offenders were convicted in court, and 158 completed Community Service Orders (CSOs). Repeat offenders face fines up to RM3,000 and 12 hours of CSO, reflecting a strong deterrence approach (BusinessToday, 2026). The Deputy Minister of Housing and Local Government reported that littering is

rampant in Kuala Lumpur's city centres, including Bukit Bintang, a popular tourist area (The New Straits Times, 2025).

In Singapore, the National Environment Agency (NEA) reported issuing over 20,000 tickets in 2023, up from 14,000 in 2021. Additionally, 2,200 CWOs were issued between 2020 and 2022, requiring offenders to clean public areas for 3–12 hours (The CNA, 2023). High-rise littering remains problematic, with about 27,100 feedback cases annually and 1,100 enforcement actions in 2023. Surveillance cameras were deployed in 97 per cent of persistent cases, achieving a 30 per cent detection rate (The CNA, 2023; Telescope, 2025; The Straits Times, 2026).

The National Waste Crime Survey 2025 in England and Wales revealed that only 27 per cent of waste crimes were reported, despite widespread incidents of fly-tipping and illegal dumping. Respondents estimated that 20 per cent of all waste may be illegally managed, with organised crime groups responsible for 35 per cent of offences (UK Government, Keep Britain Tidy Report, 2025). Enforcement remains limited, with landowners and farmers disproportionately affected, highlighting gaps in compliance and deterrence (Environment Agency, 2025).

Japan's White Paper on Crime 2025 and the Ministry of Environment reports emphasise concerns about plastic litter entering rivers and coasts, with estimates ranging from 13,000 to 31,000 tonnes annually. Surveys also show that 21.9 per cent of foreign visitors cited the lack of bins as a top concern, leading to sporadic littering in tourist areas (The Straits Times, 2025; Japan Tourism Agency Survey, 2025). Enforcement relies heavily on cultural norms and municipal waste collection rather than punitive measures (Japan Ministry of Environment, 2025).

Taken together, these statistics indicate that, in Malaysia, strong enforcement of littering laws is carried out by CSOs and through high fines. However, littering persists in urban centres. In Singapore, the figures show a high enforcement rate, innovative use of CWOs and surveillance, yet high-rise littering remains a challenge. Meanwhile, in England and Wales, enforcement gaps arise from underreporting and involvement of organised crime. However, in Japan, despite high cultural compliance, infrastructure gaps (e.g., in waste-bin availability) undermine the tourist experience.

The legal responses to littering indicate that littering remains a persistent environmental and governance challenge across jurisdictions, requiring laws that balance deterrence, rehabilitation, and proportionality. Malaysia, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and Japan have each adopted distinct approaches to regulating littering, reflecting their cultural norms and policy priorities. Malaysia's law introduced community service orders alongside fines, aiming to rehabilitate offenders while maintaining deterrence (The Edge Malaysia, 2025). Singapore pioneered CWOs, combining financial penalties with visible public clean-up duties (National Environment Agency [NEA], 2023). The UK relies on fixed penalty notices (FPNs), emphasising administrative efficiency (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs [DEFRA], 2022). Since 1970, Japan's law has imposed strict fines reflecting cultural norms of cleanliness and a zero-tolerance enforcement approach (Tokyo Metropolitan Government, 2021).

This paper evaluates the adequacy of these laws in regulating littering, focusing on their integration of the legal dimensions of proportionality, cultural legitimacy, and policy effectiveness with empirical indicators such as compliance rates, recidivism, and public satisfaction. The first part introduces the paper by discussing the concept of littering and indicating the extent of the problem in these jurisdictions. The second part explains the research methodology employed and the data sources used in this paper. While the third part examines the comparative aspects of the laws across the four jurisdictions, with relevant case studies, the fourth part discusses the theoretical framework underlying the regimes in these jurisdictions. The fifth part examines the integrated adequacy framework of such law, focusing on proportionality in sentencing, cultural legitimacy, and policy effectiveness, and is supplemented by three empirical indicators: compliance, recidivism, and public satisfaction. The sixth part examines the critiques of the laws in each jurisdiction, followed by a discussion of their implications in part seven. The conclusion is in part eight, followed by several policy recommendations for each jurisdiction in part nine.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a *comparative socio-legal methodology* that integrates *doctrinal analysis* with empirical indicators of adequacy. The doctrinal component evaluates anti-littering laws across Malaysia, Singapore, England and Wales, and Japan through three normative dimensions: proportionality, cultural legitimacy, and policy effectiveness. To strengthen methodological rigour, these dimensions are supplemented with measurable indicators—compliance rates, recidivism levels, and public satisfaction—drawn from official enforcement statistics, government reports, and public surveys.

Compliance is operationalised through the number of notices issued, fines collected, and completion of community service orders. Repeat offences and convictions indicate recidivism, while public satisfaction is assessed through survey findings, media reports, and qualitative accounts of public perception. These indicators are systematically coded and aligned with the normative dimensions to form a comparative adequacy matrix, enabling cross-jurisdictional evaluation.

By combining doctrinal analysis with empirical measurement, the *qualitative methodology* ensures that adequacy is not only theorised but also evidenced through observable outcomes. This *dual approach* allows the study to move beyond abstract principles, providing a robust framework for assessing the effectiveness and legitimacy of anti-littering laws in diverse cultural and legal contexts. *Secondary data* used in this paper include primary sources such as anti-littering laws in statutes and government enforcement reports. Secondary sources also comprise peer-reviewed articles, policy analyses, and comparative law scholarship. Triangulation of the secondary data ensures validity by cross-referencing doctrinal texts with socio-legal commentary. This methodology ensures a rigorous, comparative evaluation of legal adequacy, linking legal design to enforcement outcomes and cultural legitimacy.

Comparative Laws on Littering

In Malaysia, the new Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Management (Amendment) Act 2025 amended the principal Act of the Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Management Act 2007. The new amended law criminalises littering in section 77A by providing that littering is throwing, discarding, placing, or leaving behind, or causing to be thrown, discarded, placed, or left behind, any solid waste in any public place or public road, except in receptacles designated for such purposes. The scope of the Amendment Act 2025 is limited to West Malaysia and Labuan and does not apply to Sabah and Sarawak.

Section 77A (2) prescribes fines up to RM2,000 for first offences. Courts may impose community service orders under Section 77B (1), requiring offenders to perform up to 12 hours of service over six months, with a cap of 4 hours per day. Section 77B (6) provides the sanctions for non-compliance, including additional fines of between RM2,000 and RM10,000. Supervision is vested in authorised officers, who determine the time, place, and type of service (section 77B(4)). The policy aims to instil civic responsibility, reduce pollution, and enhance Malaysia's public image (The Edge Malaysia, 2025; Bernama, 2026).

A recent case, *PP v Mohammed Nuh Qurasaini Kayat* (2026), highlights the enforcement of the new anti-littering law. In February 2026, a Singaporean man was fined RM1,500 and ordered to perform four hours of community service after throwing a cigarette butt on Jalan Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur, instead of using a designated bin. The court also imposed a default penalty of one month's imprisonment if the fine was unpaid (The Online Citizen Asia, 2026). On the same day, enforcement officers issued 644 offence notices, of which 144 were against foreigners, demonstrating the impartial application of the law (Bernama, 2026). Cigarette butt littering was identified as the most common offence, underscoring the persistent challenge of urban litter management in Malaysia's capital.

This case was the first time a foreign offender was prosecuted under Malaysia's strengthened littering law, marking a significant precedent in cross-border enforcement. This case also demonstrates Malaysia's *zero-tolerance approach* to littering, especially in tourist-heavy areas such as Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur. It also reinforces the *deterrent effect* of combining fines with CSO, ensuring offenders contribute to public cleanliness. It also suggests that Malaysia emphasises restorative justice alongside punitive measures. Besides, it also

highlights *public visibility* of enforcement, with SWCorp officers present in court and media coverage amplifying deterrence (The Straits Times, 2026; The Online Citizen Asia, 2026).

The Singapore Environmental Public Health Act 1987 governs littering offences. Section 17(1) provides that littering involves depositing, dropping, placing, or throwing any item, such as plastic cups, tissue paper, cigarette butts, or food wrappers, in a public place, except into designated rubbish bins (Tan KP, 2019). Even seemingly insignificant acts, such as flicking a cigarette butt onto the street or leaving a food container behind, are considered littering offences (Tan KP, 2019). Penalties range from S\$2,000 for first offences to S\$10,000 for third offences. Section 21A empowers courts to impose Corrective Work Orders (CWOs) requiring offenders to clean public areas for up to 12 hours, under officer supervision (Tan KP, 2019). CWOs are highly visible, with offenders wearing vests. Non-compliance can result in further prosecution (Tan CH, 2019). The scope includes general littering, bulky item disposal, and illegal dumping from vehicles (Section 20), which carries fines up to S\$50,000 and imprisonment. Policy aims emphasise deterrence, public health, and the reinforcement of Singapore's reputation for cleanliness (Quah, 2010; Tan, 2019).

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 in England and Wales regulates littering under Section 87, which makes it an offence to throw, drop, or deposit litter in public places, including rivers and to leave it there on private land (DEFRA, 2019). The 1990 Act was amended by the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005. The conviction carries a fine of up to Level 4 on the standard scale (£2,500). Enforcement is primarily through Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) under Section 88, which allow offenders to discharge their liability by paying a set fine without court proceedings (DEFRA, 2022b). Non-payment leads to prosecution. There are no community service orders specific to littering; sanctions are financial and administrative. Local authorities have duties under Section 89 to keep land clear of litter, in accordance with DEFRA's Code of Practice. Policy aims focus on administrative efficiency, maintaining cleanliness standards, and reducing environmental harm (DEFRA, 2022; Burnett, 2018a, 2018 b).

The Waste Management and Public Cleansing Law (Law No. 137 of 1970) in Japan prohibits improper waste disposal under Article 16, which requires it to be disposed of only at designated facilities. Article 25 prescribes penalties, including fines up to ¥1,000,000 and imprisonment for severe offences. Enforcement is strict, with responsibilities placed on citizens (Article 3) to cooperate with the government in waste reduction and sorting, and on businesses (Article 6) to manage and recycle waste. There are no community service orders; sanctions are deterrence-focused. Policy aims emphasise preserving the living environment, improving public health, and reinforcing Japan's cultural emphasis on cleanliness (Hasegawa, 2015ab; Yamamoto, 2017).

Theoretical Foundations of Anti-Littering Laws

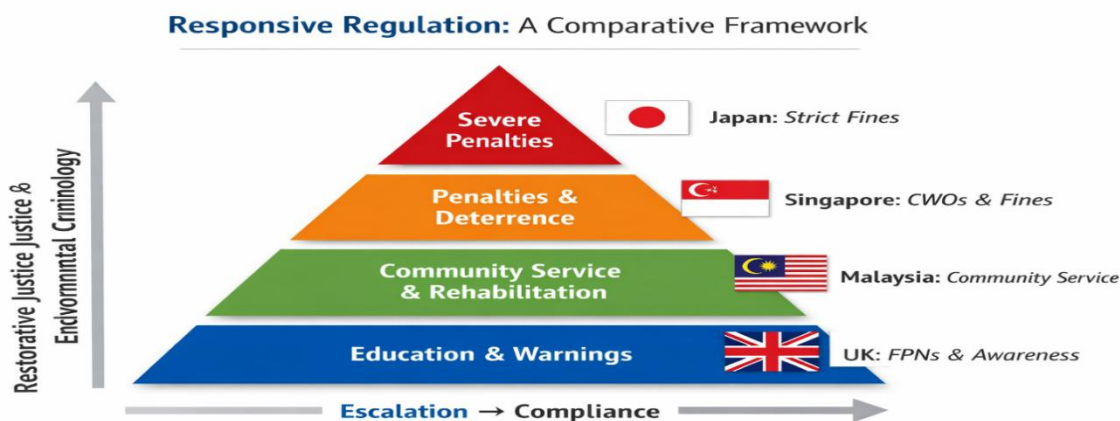
Anti-littering laws across jurisdictions are informed by distinct theoretical frameworks that shape their design, enforcement, and adequacy. Malaysia's hybrid deterrence-rehabilitation model under the 2025 Amendment Act reflects *Restorative Justice Theory*, which emphasises repairing harm and reintegrating offenders into the community (Zehr, 2002). By requiring community service, the law embodies *Responsive Regulation Theory*, where sanctions escalate proportionately but begin with rehabilitative measures to encourage compliance (Ayres & Braithwaite, 1992). Meanwhile, Singapore's Corrective Work Orders (CWOs) are grounded in *Deterrence Theory*, using visible punishment to discourage offending (Quah, 2010). The public shaming element reflects *Social Norm Theory*, reinforcing collective discipline through cultural legitimacy (Tan, 2019). However, critics argue that proportionality is undermined, suggesting a need for integration with *Civic Education Theory* to sustain long-term behavioural change (Low, 2015).

The Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 in England and Wales reflect *Administrative Efficiency Theory*, prioritising streamlined enforcement (DEFRA, 2022). However, the absence of rehabilitative measures highlights the limits of addressing repeat offending and underscores the relevance of Environmental Criminology, which emphasises situational prevention and behavioural change (Burnett, 2018; Jones, 2017). On the other hand, Japan's strict fines under the Waste Management and Public Cleansing Law are informed by *Cultural Norm Theory*, where compliance is sustained by deeply embedded societal values of cleanliness (Hasegawa, 2015b). The severity of sanctions reflects *Deterrence Theory*, but risks disproportionate outcomes, particularly for outsiders unfamiliar with local norms (Yamamoto, 2017). Calls for reform suggest

integrating *Sustainability Theory*, which balances deterrence with education to ensure fairness and long-term legitimacy (Kobayashi, 2020).

Taken together, these jurisdictions illustrate how theories of deterrence, restorative justice, responsive regulation, and cultural legitimacy interact with empirical indicators of compliance, recidivism, and public satisfaction. Adequacy is maximised when deterrence is balanced with rehabilitation, sanctions remain proportionate, and enforcement resonates with cultural norms.

Figure 1



The above-mentioned Responsive Regulation theory can be shown via the comparative enforcement pyramid, which further illustrates how these jurisdictions regulate littering through escalating strategies, from education to severe penalties, with the law's adequacy measured by compliance, recidivism, and public satisfaction.

At the base tier, England and Wales rely on fixed penalty notices (FPNs) and awareness campaigns. This pyramid reflects proportionality and administrative efficiency, but the depth of rehabilitative support limits the law's adequacy. Indicators show moderate compliance rates (a high number of fines issued annually), yet recidivism remains high, with repeat offenders continuing to litter. Public satisfaction surveys reveal mixed perceptions: citizens value proportional fines but question their long-term effectiveness. This situation reflects proportionality in sanctioning but lacks rehabilitative depth, limiting adequacy to administrative efficiency rather than behavioural reform.

Moving upward, Malaysia occupies the community service and rehabilitation tier, combining fines with Community Service Orders (CSOs). Adequacy of the law here is measured by CSO completion rates (e.g., 158 offenders completed CSOs in 2026), declining recidivism among rehabilitated offenders, and positive public acceptance surveys that highlight fairness in requiring offenders to contribute to public cleanliness. Compliance rates are improving, though enforcement challenges persist in urban hotspots. Public satisfaction is generally positive, with support for restorative justice, though concerns remain about steep fines for non-compliance. This hybrid approach balances deterrence with rehabilitation, fostering civic responsibility and cultural legitimacy.

At the penalties and deterrence tier, Singapore enforces heavy fines and Corrective Work Orders (CWOs), often carried out in public spaces. Adequacy is reflected in high compliance rates - over 20,000 tickets issued in 2023, and low recidivism, as offenders rarely repeat offences due to visible deterrence. However, public satisfaction is divided: while many citizens support strict enforcement, surveys reveal concerns about proportionality and stigma associated with public shaming.

At the apex of the pyramid, Japan imposes severe fines up to ¥1,000,000, reflecting cultural norms of cleanliness and zero tolerance. Adequacy is measured by very high compliance rates, with littering incidents remaining rare in urban centres. Recidivism is negligible, as societal expectations reinforce deterrence. However, public satisfaction surveys reveal tension: while citizens value cleanliness, tourists often express dissatisfaction with the availability of bins, suggesting that infrastructural gaps undermine perceived fairness. This situation reflects

zero-tolerance adequacy - highly effective compliance, but risks overly punitive outcomes without rehabilitative options.

This pyramid narrative demonstrates that the adequacy of the anti-littering law is multidimensional: the compliance rate captures deterrence effectiveness, recidivism reflects rehabilitative success, and public satisfaction measures legitimacy and proportionality. By integrating these indicators, the pyramid becomes not only a descriptive model of comparative enforcement but also an evaluative framework for assessing the adequacy of anti-littering laws across these jurisdictions. Significantly, the lower tiers (England and Wales, Malaysia) emphasise proportionality and rehabilitation, while the higher tiers (Singapore, Japan) emphasise deterrence and strict compliance. The pyramid thus demonstrates that adequacy is maximised when deterrence is balanced with rehabilitation and cultural legitimacy, ensuring both effectiveness and fairness.

Integrated Adequacy Framework of the Anti-Littering Laws

The adequacy of anti-littering laws can now be evaluated through a *dual-layered framework* that combines normative dimensions (proportionality, cultural legitimacy, and policy effectiveness) with empirical indicators (compliance rate, recidivism, and public satisfaction). This integration transforms adequacy from a conceptual to an operational measure, enabling comparative assessment across jurisdictions.

1. Proportionality and Compliance

Proportionality ensures that sanctions correspond to the gravity of the offence and the offender's capacity (Burnett, 2018). In Malaysia, proportionality is achieved through moderate fines and community service, with 6,680 notices issued and 158 CSOs completed, showing improved compliance. In Singapore, high compliance (20,000 tickets, 2,200 CWOs) demonstrates effective deterrence, though concerns about proportionality arise from public shaming (Tan, 2019). In England and Wales, proportionality is maintained through fixed-penalty notices, yet compliance remains moderate, as offenders often treat fines as transactional (Jones, 2017). In Japan, strict fines up to ¥1,000,000 ensure near-total compliance, but proportionality is questioned for minor infractions, especially among tourists (Yamamoto, 2017).

2. Cultural Legitimacy and Recidivism

Cultural legitimacy reflects how well laws align with societal norms and values, while recidivism measures behavioural persistence or change. Malaysia's collectivist ethos supports civic rehabilitation, reducing recidivism through community service (Bernama, 2025). Singapore's governance culture legitimises visible deterrence, achieving low recidivism through social stigma (Tan, 2019). England and Wales show limited cultural resonance; repeat offenders often reoffend, indicating weak normative influence (Jones, 2017). Japan's cultural emphasis on cleanliness yields negligible recidivism, as compliance is reinforced by social expectations rather than enforcement alone (Hasegawa, 2015; Kobayashi, 2020).

3. Policy Effectiveness and Public Satisfaction

Policy effectiveness assesses whether enforcement achieves intended outcomes—cleaner environments and civic responsibility—while public satisfaction gauges legitimacy and trust (Jones, 2017; Tan, 2019). Malaysia's hybrid model earns positive public perception for fairness and rehabilitation, though enforcement capacity limits effectiveness. Singapore's strict regime achieves visible cleanliness but divides public opinion between support for order and concern over proportionality (NEA, 2023; Tan, 2019). England and Wales maintain administrative efficiency but low satisfaction, as citizens view fines as insufficient for behavioural reform (Ayres & Braithwaite, 1992; Zehr, 2002). Japan's zero-tolerance model sustains high effectiveness and cleanliness, yet 21.9 per cent of tourists cite a lack of bins, revealing infrastructural gaps that affect satisfaction (Yamamoto, 2017).

This integrated framework provides a robust comparative lens for evaluating how anti-littering laws achieve both normative justice and empirical effectiveness. It suggests that integrating proportionality, cultural legitimacy, and policy effectiveness with compliance, recidivism, and public satisfaction makes adequacy a multidimensional construct that links legal design to empirical outcomes. Malaysia and Singapore exemplify

hybrid adequacy, balancing deterrence and rehabilitation. England and Wales demonstrate administrative adequacy but limited behavioural impact. Japan achieves cultural adequacy through near-perfect compliance, though proportional fairness remains contested.

The Critiques of the Law

Despite their effectiveness in certain contexts, each jurisdiction's approach has been criticised for failing to adequately balance fairness and long-term behavioural change. In Malaysia, while community service orders embody restorative justice, critics argue that fines for non-compliance (up to RM10,000) may be disproportionate relative to minor infractions (The Edge Malaysia, 2025). Such severe fines may undermine proportionality despite moderate compliance and reduced recidivism. Enforcement capacity also poses challenges, as supervision of offenders requires significant administrative resources (Zehr, 2002). Nevertheless, the critiques of Singapore CWOs contend that they are effective deterrents, lowering recidivism and sustaining compliance. However, public shaming through distinctive vests reduces satisfaction and raises concerns about proportionality and fairness (Tan, 2019). Commentators also note that punishment may exceed the harm caused, undermining the perceptions of fairness (Quah, 2010).

In England and Wales, the FPNs are administratively efficient, but their adequacy is questioned due to a lack of rehabilitative measures (Jones, 2017). Repeat offenders may simply absorb fines without changing behaviour, limiting long-term effectiveness (Burnett, 2018; Jones, 2017). The English and Welsh model indicates high recidivism and low satisfaction persist despite moderate compliance. Finally, the critiques of the Japanese model contend that strict fines of up to ¥1,000,000 deter littering effectively, achieve negligible recidivism, and also have very high compliance. However, critics argue they are excessive for minor acts, particularly for tourists unfamiliar with local norms, which highlight disproportionate outcomes and dissatisfaction (Yamamoto, 2017; Kobayashi, 2020). The absence of rehabilitative or educational measures further undermines adequacy, as deterrence alone may not foster civic responsibility (Yamamoto, 2017).

The Implications of the Law

The anti-littering laws also carry implications for the environment, civic education, economic sustainability, and the legitimacy of governance. When assessed through the normative principles of proportionality, cultural legitimacy, and policy effectiveness, and measured against compliance, recidivism, and public satisfaction, these laws reveal broader societal impacts.

1. Environmental Implications

Anti-littering laws directly influence environmental quality by reducing waste in public spaces and preventing pollution. In Malaysia, community service orders under the 2025 Amendment Act require offenders to clean drains and public areas, visibly improving environmental outcomes (New Straits Times, 2025). Singapore's CWOs achieve immediate harm reduction by mandating offenders to restore cleanliness, while Japan's strict fines sustain near-zero tolerance, reinforcing cultural norms of environmental stewardship (Hasegawa, 2015b). High compliance rates in Japan and Singapore demonstrate effectiveness, but proportionality concerns arise when penalties are excessively severe.

2. Educational and Civic Responsibility Implications

Laws framed as civic education foster long-term behavioural change. Malaysia's rehabilitative model reduces recidivism by embedding offenders in community service that promotes awareness (Zehr, 2002). Singapore's CWOs, if reframed as civic education rather than public shaming, could enhance public satisfaction and fairness (Tan, 2019). England and Wales, however, rely on transactional fines, which limit opportunities for civic responsibility and fail to address repeat offending (Jones, 2017).

3. Economic and Tourism Implications

Clean environments attract tourism and reduce municipal clean-up costs. Malaysia's reforms are linked to Visit Malaysia Year 2026, highlighting the economic stakes of compliance (New Straits Times, 2026). Singapore's reputation for order enhances its global image, while Japan's cleanliness is internationally recognised, boosting tourism appeal (Yamamoto, 2017). However, disproportionate fines risk alienating tourists, undermining public satisfaction. England and Wales benefit from administrative efficiency, but weak control of recidivism limits long-term economic sustainability (Burnett, 2018).

4. Legal and Governance Implications

Governments must balance enforcement capacity with proportional sanctions. Malaysia faces challenges in supervising offenders, raising questions of policy effectiveness (The Edge Malaysia, 2025). Singapore's CWOs reinforce governance legitimacy but risk fairness concerns (Low, 2015). England and Wales streamline enforcement but sacrifice rehabilitative depth, while Japan's strict deterrence strengthens legitimacy but raises questions about proportionality. Compliance rates reflect enforcement credibility, recidivism signals gaps in deterrence, and public satisfaction indicates legitimacy.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this comparative study of anti-littering laws in Malaysia, Singapore, England and Wales, and Japan demonstrates that regulatory adequacy is best understood as a dynamic balance between *normative dimensions* - proportionality, cultural legitimacy, and policy effectiveness - and *empirical indicators* of compliance, recidivism, and public satisfaction.

Malaysia's hybrid model, combining fines with community service, reflects a restorative orientation that enhances proportionality and civic responsibility. Empirically, this approach shows promise in reducing recidivism and improving public satisfaction, though enforcement capacity constrains overall compliance. Across the causeway, Singapore's Corrective Work Orders exemplify visible deterrence aligned with governance culture, achieving high compliance rates. Nevertheless, criticisms of public shaming highlight tensions with proportionality and fairness, and evidence of repeat offending suggests limited rehabilitative impact. Meanwhile, England and Wales' reliance on fixed penalty notices prioritises administrative efficiency and secures moderate compliance. However, the absence of rehabilitative measures weakens long-term reductions in recidivism and diminishes public satisfaction with fairness. Lastly, Japan's strict fines, rooted in cultural norms of cleanliness, achieve high compliance and legitimacy. However, their severity risks disproportionate outcomes and alienates offenders, undermining rehabilitative potential and public satisfaction.

Across jurisdictions, cultural legitimacy emerges as a critical determinant of compliance, while proportionality and rehabilitative measures are essential to reducing recidivism and sustaining public satisfaction. Systems that integrate deterrence with restorative justice, such as Malaysia's community service, demonstrate greater fairness, sustainability, and citizen approval. Conversely, deterrence-only regimes risk alienating offenders, eroding satisfaction, and failing to instil long-term behavioural change.

The comparative synthesis suggests that adequacy is maximised when laws combine *deterrence with rehabilitation*, are culturally resonant to secure compliance, and impose proportional sanctions that reduce recidivism and enhance public satisfaction. Ultimately, adequate regulation of littering is achieved not through punitive severity alone, but through a *balanced, empirically validated, and reform-oriented approach*. This conclusion underscores the importance of integrating normative and empirical dimensions in comparative legal analysis, offering lessons for jurisdictions seeking to harmonise environmental governance with fairness, effectiveness, and civic responsibility.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The comparative analysis suggests that future reforms must integrate proportionality, cultural legitimacy, and policy effectiveness with measurable outcomes such as compliance, recidivism, and public satisfaction. In

Malaysia, the *hybrid deterrence-rehabilitation model* should be strengthened by expanding community service orders to include environmental education and awareness campaigns. This model would not only improve compliance but also reduce recidivism and enhance public satisfaction, while moderating fines would ensure proportionality. Singapore's *deterrence-focused regime* remains highly effective at securing compliance and reducing recidivism. However, reforms should recalibrate fines to household incomes and reframe Corrective Work Orders as civic education rather than punitive spectacles. Such changes would sustain deterrence while improving perceptions of fairness.

England and Wales, with their reliance on *fixed-penalty notices*, must introduce *restorative measures*, such as *community service for repeat offenders*, and expand awareness campaigns to foster cultural legitimacy. This approach would address high recidivism and low public satisfaction, while maintaining administrative efficiency. Japan's *zero-tolerance model* achieves near-total compliance and negligible recidivism, but risks disproportionate outcomes. Calibrating fines to the severity of the offence and supplementing enforcement with educational programs would preserve cultural legitimacy while improving fairness. Addressing infrastructural gaps, such as bin availability, would further enhance public satisfaction. Collectively, these reforms demonstrate that the law's adequacy is maximised when deterrence is balanced with rehabilitation, sanctions remain proportionate, and laws resonate with cultural norms while producing measurable improvements in compliance, recidivism, and satisfaction.

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