

GOVERNMENT POLICY ANALYSIS IN ADDRESSING JUVENILE DRUG ABUSE CRIMES IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse government policies in addressing drug abuse crimes among adolescents and to identify the main challenges as well as the necessary solutions. A normative juridical approach was employed through a literature review of regulations, policy documents, and legal case studies. The findings indicate that although national regulations, such as Law No. 35/2009, support rehabilitative approaches and child protection, implementation remains suboptimal due to weak inter-agency coordination, limited child-friendly rehabilitation facilities, and a lack of understanding among law enforcement officers regarding restorative justice approaches. Additionally, social stigma and family fear of reporting their children are major obstacles, along with insufficient information on available rehabilitation services and inadequate enforcement of existing regulations at the grassroots level. The study recommends policy reform through legislative revision to strengthen rehabilitation efforts and children's rights protection, capacity building for relevant institutions, and the use of digital technology for education and prevention in the community. Furthermore, the development of a nationally coordinated, technology-based system with a humane and adolescent-responsive approach is suggested to ensure more effective and sustainable interventions for the future of Indonesia's youth.

Keywords: *Policy, Criminal Offense, Drug Abuse, Adolescents.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse among adolescents has become a highly complex and alarming social issue in Indonesia. Adolescents, who are in a phase of psychological and social development, are particularly vulnerable to various forms of behavioural deviation, including the use of illicit substances such as narcotics (Kang, 2022). This stage of life is marked by heightened curiosity, a search for identity, and a strong need for social acceptance, all of which make young people more susceptible to peer pressure and environmental influences (Ngatini, 2025). According to the National Narcotics Agency (BNN) data from 2023, approximately 2.29% of students and university students in Indonesia have used drugs at least once in their lives (Panjaitan, Risdalina & Kusno, 2023). This statistic serves as a serious warning to all stakeholders, especially the government, to take concrete and comprehensive action to address this issue.

Government policies aimed at combating drug abuse have so far been articulated through various regulations, such as Law No. 35 of 2009 on Narcotics and its implementing provisions, which support the work of the BNN, the police, and other relevant institutions (Yunus & Lasori, 2021). In addition, sectoral policies in the fields of education and health have also been issued to regulate the prevention and management of drug abuse in schools and communities (Rizvi, 2022). However, the effectiveness of these policies remains questionable, particularly in the context of addressing adolescents as a vulnerable group. The current approach is still largely dominated by a repressive legal paradigm, which has proven inadequate in reducing drug abuse rates among the younger generation. Often, adolescents caught using drugs are subjected to criminal penalties without being provided access to more

humane, rehabilitative, and educational approaches focused on recovery (Pakpahan et al., 2024).

The evolving nature of the issue is further complicated by technological advancements. Drug distribution now occurs not only through conventional means but also via digital platforms, social media, and online delivery services (Moeller, 2022). New forms of narcotics disguised as food, beverages, or seemingly innocuous products also make it easier for adolescents to be exposed to drugs unknowingly. This raises critical questions: Are existing policies still relevant and capable of addressing current challenges? How are these policies being implemented in the field? Have they adequately considered the unique sociological and psychological characteristics of adolescents? These questions underscore the need for a comprehensive and in-depth policy analysis to assess the effectiveness of existing measures and to propose more adaptive and contextual policy alternatives.

Previous studies have attempted to address some of these concerns. For instance, Song & Jiang (2025) emphasized the importance of rehabilitative approaches for adolescent drug users and strongly criticized the dominant punitive measures, which are seen as counterproductive to adolescent recovery. Chunlin & Nanchang (2023) highlighted the crucial role of families and schools in fostering adolescent resilience through character education, counselling, and consistent supervision. In the field of public policy, several studies have underscored the importance of synergy between sectors education, health, law, and social affairs in designing drug prevention and intervention programs (Atato et al., 2025). One approach that has shown promise is the community-based model implemented through pilot programs by BNN in collaboration with local NGOs, emphasizing education, community participation, and psychosocial support. Unfortunately, such initiatives remain sporadic and have yet to be fully integrated into a comprehensive national policy framework.

Another commonly discussed solution in the literature is the use of digital technology for awareness campaigns and education. Evans et al. (2020) for example, studied the effectiveness of social media in delivering anti-drug messages to adolescents. Her research revealed that messages designed in an engaging manner and delivered by youth role models can significantly increase awareness and negative attitudes toward drugs. However, the effectiveness of this approach greatly depends on the consistency of campaigns, the digital media management skills of related institutions, and the active participation of adolescents themselves. Therefore, this strategy has limitations unless supported by policies that promote systemic youth engagement and technological utilization.

From this review of various approaches and proposed solutions, it can be concluded that an integrative strategy combining legal, educational, social, and technological elements holds the most promise. Nonetheless, most existing studies tend to focus on a single dimension without holistically examining the policymaking process from formulation to implementation and evaluation. Furthermore, there is a lack of research specifically examining the effectiveness of policies targeting adolescents as a distinct demographic group with unique sociological characteristics. Another notable gap is the absence of region-specific and contextual data to inform more responsive and locally relevant policies.

This study seeks to fill these gaps by comprehensively analyzing government policies for addressing drug abuse crimes among adolescents. The analysis not only explores the content of the policies but also investigates their on-the-ground implementation, the extent of youth and community involvement, and the policies' impact on reducing drug abuse cases. By employing an evidence-based public policy analysis approach, this research aims to make a significant scholarly contribution to both social policy theory and public policy practice in Indonesia.

The aim of this study is to analyze government policies in addressing drug abuse crimes among adolescents, as well as to identify the main challenges and necessary solutions to make

these policies more effective and sustainable. This study also aims to provide an overview of the structure, implementation, and evaluation of existing policies, and to develop a policy model that is more responsive to the social and psychological dynamics of adolescents, including through normative legal analysis and community-based approaches.

Given the complexity of the drug abuse problem and its long-term consequences for the future of the younger generation, this study holds both urgency and relevance. It not only seeks to provide a critique of current policies but also contributes to shaping more targeted, inclusive, and needs-based policy directions. Therefore, it is essential for researchers to formulate clear and systematic research objectives to guide the analysis process and ensure that the study effectively addresses the core problems identified.

B. METHOD

This study employs a normative juridical approach, focusing on the analysis of statutory regulations and relevant legal materials related to drug abuse among adolescents. As explained by Soekanto & Mamudji (2010), normative legal research is conducted through the examination of literature or secondary data, which includes primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials. To deepen the analysis, a conceptual approach is also employed to explore theories of public policy and youth protection, alongside a case approach to understand the application of legal norms through court decision studies (Maruki, 2017). Data were collected through literature review and analyzed qualitatively, in accordance with the method described by Johnny Ibrahim (2007), to interpret the content and meaning of legal norms and their practical application. Through this methodology, the study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness of government policies and to propose legal solutions that are more responsive to the protection needs of adolescents.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The Effectiveness of Legal Policies Toward Adolescent Narcotics Users

The handling of narcotics abuse crimes among adolescents in Indonesia is governed by various national regulations, particularly Law No. 35 of 2009 on Narcotics (Mulyani & Hasuri, 2024). Normatively, this regulation provides ample space for a rehabilitative approach to narcotics addicts, including minors. Article 127(1)(a) allows for medical and social rehabilitation for narcotics users, while Article 54 emphasizes that addicts and victims of narcotics abuse are obligated to undergo rehabilitation rather than face criminal penalties (Lakzana et al., 2025). These provisions should serve as a strong foundation to differentiate legal treatment between users and traffickers and to ensure protection for adolescents who are victims of narcotics abuse.

However, when these legal norms are implemented in practice, several issues emerge. Law enforcement remains largely repressive. Adolescents caught using narcotics are often immediately processed through the criminal justice system and sentenced to imprisonment (Baltabekovna et al., 2025). In several judicial decisions, it is evident that law enforcement officers do not consistently consider rehabilitation options, even when the suspect is a first-time user, underage, or when there is insufficient evidence linking them to drug trafficking networks. In certain cases, requests for rehabilitation assessments are denied due to weak coordination among law enforcement agencies, the National Narcotics Agency (BNN), and rehabilitation institutions.

This discrepancy between legal norms and their implementation highlights structural weaknesses in Indonesia's narcotics legal policy, particularly in its application to minors. Theoretically, modern criminal justice systems recognize the necessity of adopting a differentiated approach toward juveniles in conflict with the law (Joyce & Laverick, 2022). From a public policy perspective, the approach toward adolescent narcotics users should be

preventive and rehabilitative, rather than merely curative and punitive. Adolescents should be regarded as a vulnerable group with the potential for recovery through education, psychological support, and social reintegration. Unfortunately, this perspective has not yet become the dominant paradigm in the narcotics justice system.

Another obstacle to the effectiveness of these legal policies is the limited availability of accessible rehabilitation facilities for adolescent users, particularly in remote areas. Moreover, not all law enforcement personnel fully understand the administrative and technical mechanisms for initiating rehabilitation requests. A lack of training and awareness regarding child protection principles in the context of narcotics law leads many officers to adhere to punitive logic. Social stigma against drug users remains pervasive, and public pressure often compels authorities to impose harsh penalties, without recognizing that adolescent users are often victims of a broader narcotics distribution system.

These findings suggest that the government's legal policy in addressing narcotics abuse among adolescents remains suboptimal. On one hand, the legal framework has adopted a relatively progressive stance in terms of rehabilitation and protection; on the other hand, its implementation fails to align with this protective spirit. The gap between legal norms and practice represents a key challenge within Indonesia's narcotics law enforcement system. Reform efforts are therefore necessary, including strengthening the capacity of law enforcement personnel, simplifying rehabilitation assessment procedures, and providing accessible, child-friendly rehabilitation facilities.

By analyzing both the legal framework and its implementation, it can be concluded that legal approaches toward adolescent narcotics users should prioritize restorative justice principles and child protection. Rather than subjecting minors to punitive measures, ideal legal policies should aim to support their recovery, re-education, and social reintegration. This approach is not only consistent with the principles of modern law but also holds greater promise for creating long-term positive outcomes for the future of Indonesia's youth.

2. The Implementation of Preventive Policies and Their Weaknesses

Preventive policies in addressing narcotics abuse among adolescents have been an integral part of Indonesia's national strategy, implemented through the National Narcotics Agency (BNN) via the Prevention, Eradication of Abuse and Illicit Circulation of Narcotics Program (P4GN) (Wulandari & Hartati, 2020). This program primarily aims to reduce the prevalence of drug abuse through education, awareness campaigns, and the strengthening of resilience at the individual, family, and community levels. One of its concrete implementations is the collaboration between BNN and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology to provide drug awareness education in schools.

While normatively progressive, the program's implementation has not demonstrated optimal effectiveness. Observations across various regions indicate that preventive activities remain concentrated in urban and semi-urban areas. Schools in major cities typically have established partnerships with relevant agencies to conduct anti-drug counselling, training, and campaigns. However, in rural and high-risk (red zone) areas, such programs have not been adequately executed. Many schools in remote regions lack access to necessary informational resources and trained personnel, leaving adolescents in those areas vulnerable to drug abuse without sufficient awareness of its risks (Degenhardt et al., 2016). This urban-rural disparity underscores the need for more inclusive and targeted intervention strategies that reach marginalized communities.

In addition to uneven distribution, the program suffers from the absence of a robust monitoring and evaluation system. The lack of periodic evaluations makes it difficult to assess the actual impact of preventive efforts on the ground. The government currently lacks comprehensive data to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs in reducing drug abuse

among youth. Without accurate reporting and oversight mechanisms, policy interventions risk becoming mere administrative formalities without substantive impact. Recent literature consistently highlights the importance of continuous monitoring and cost-effectiveness analysis in preventive drug programs (Rodríguez-Tanta, Summers & Shaya, 2025). For instance, a systematic review of cost-effective interventions for prescription drug misuse emphasizes the need for incorporating ongoing economic evaluation and community-level feasibility studies to ensure lasting program impact. Another mixed-methods study evaluating community-based preventive interventions stressed that implementation feasibility assessments are crucial for adapting programs to local contexts and for enabling data-driven improvements. Without such mechanisms, initiatives cannot be refined nor justified, limiting their real-world effectiveness.

Cultural and social challenges also hinder the implementation of preventive policies. One major obstacle is the persistent societal stigma against narcotics users, including adolescents. Studies show stigma toward substance use disorders acts as a substantial barrier to treatment-seeking and increases secrecy and shame among young people (Hammarlund et al., 2018). In Indonesian society, drug users are often viewed as criminals or familial disgraces, prompting families to hide any involvement this internalized and perceived stigma discourages adolescents from seeking help and deters parents from voluntarily presenting children for rehabilitation under the IPWL scheme.

The government's voluntary reporting mechanism under the Institution of Mandatory Reporting Recipients (IPWL), coordinated by the Ministry of Health, allows narcotics users, including minors, to access rehabilitation without criminal prosecution. However, participation remains extremely low. This aligns with findings from Indonesia's 2014 National Narcotic Survey, which reported just 14.7% of drug abusers had ever used treatment services, with awareness, outreach, and positive perceptions of efficacy being critical determinants of utilization (Sabarinah, 2019). Contributing factors include limited government outreach and low legal literacy, which create fear that reporting may trigger legal or social penalties highlighting the gap between policy design and its reception.

The inaccessibility of information about IPWL and low public understanding of reporting procedures reflect broader issues in public health communication. Evidence suggests that stigma-reduction strategies such as educational interventions and social contact approaches improve help-seeking preferences by addressing public stigma and perceived dangerousness, especially among adolescents (Cheetham, Sandral & Lubman, 2020).

From a regulatory standpoint, legal frameworks are in place to support preventive and rehabilitative policies. Yet effective execution demands strong cross-sectoral coordination bringing together government officials, educators, healthcare providers, religious and community leaders. Without grassroots-level synergy and communication, these normative policies risk remaining mere formalities, failing to deliver real-world benefits for adolescents in need. Thus, a reformulation of the preventive policy implementation strategy is imperative. The P4GN program must be expanded to reach high-prevalence areas, involving direct participation from schools, religious institutions, and civil society organizations. Public outreach regarding IPWL should also be conducted on a large and inclusive scale, utilizing media tailored to the local context and community characteristics. In the long term, strengthening an effective and equitable prevention and rehabilitation system will be essential to sustainably reduce narcotics abuse among adolescents.

3. Challenges in Policy Implementation and Inter-Institutional Coordination

One of the key findings of this study is that the effectiveness of drug abuse prevention policies targeting adolescents is not solely determined by the strength of legal frameworks, but also critically hinges on the quality of policy implementation by relevant stakeholders. In this

context, inter-institutional coordination emerges as a pivotal factor influencing policy outcomes. Unfortunately, available data indicates that policy implementation is frequently hindered by weak synergy and fragmentation among law enforcement agencies, educational institutions, social services, and health sectors directly involved in addressing adolescent drug abuse cases. Studies highlight that siloed operations, divergent ownership perceptions, and lack of vertical–horizontal integration severely impair collaborative drug prevention efforts.

This misalignment manifests in several crucial aspects. First, there is no integrated national database that records comprehensive information about drug-using adolescents, including rehabilitation status, legal proceedings, and medical or social intervention histories. As a result, each institution operates within fragmented information systems leading to duplicated efforts or conflicting actions. International evidence underscores how inter-agency implementation frameworks that span justice, health, and social services (e.g., the Behavioural Health Services Cascade) improve screening, referral, and continuity of care for youth .

Second, there is no binding or systematic mechanism for cross-sector coordination. Ideally, adolescent drug cases should involve at least five key sectors: law enforcement, prosecution, the judiciary, social services, and the Ministries of Health and Education. However, in practice, cooperation remains ad hoc and dependent on local actors' initiative. Implementation studies, such as JJ-TRIALS, demonstrate that establishing Local Change Teams and system mapping supported by external facilitation and data-driven decision-making significantly enhance interagency alignment and referral outcomes (Belenko et al., 2022).

Third, many educational institutions remain passive in early detection and intervention. Schools, despite their strategic position, often lack qualified counselling services and trained educators. Rather than acting as entry points to rehabilitative pathways, disciplinary actions like suspension or expulsion are over-relied upon a phenomenon observed when institutional mandates are disconnected from implementation capacity, leading to missed opportunities for intervention (Oldeide, Fosse & Holsen, 2019).

Fourth, while Law No. 35 of 2009 provides a solid legal framework for rehabilitative approaches, operational execution falters due to poor governance infrastructure. The literature emphasizes that robust legal norms require equally strong implementation systems such as standardized protocols, real-time data sharing, and multi-sector training to translate normative ideals into tangible outcomes.

The consequence of poor coordination is the failure to establish an effective legal protection system for adolescents as a vulnerable group. Youths who should be treated as victims are often subjected to punitive measures due to the lack of a functional system directing them toward rehabilitation. This is fundamentally at odds with the principles of restorative justice and child protection enshrined in various national laws, including the Child Protection Act and the Juvenile Criminal Justice System Act. Without mechanisms for coordination and integrated systems, existing policy efforts will fall short of achieving their intended outcomes.

Accordingly, policy improvement efforts should prioritize the development of a nationally coordinated, cross-sectoral system supported by information technology and binding regulations. The central government must take the initiative to establish an integrated information system on drug abuse and develop standardized inter-agency operating procedures that govern the handling of adolescent drug users from detection and early intervention to rehabilitation and social reintegration. Such institutional reforms will enhance the operational capacity of existing policies and ensure that every adolescent involved in drug use receives proper legal protection and coordinated rehabilitative support.

4. Recommendations for Legal Policy Reformulation

Based on a normative analysis of existing legislation and a conceptual approach to child protection and public policy, this study recommends a progressive and responsive

reformulation of legal policies to address drug-related offenses among adolescents. The proposed reformulation emphasizes a shift from punitive to restorative and rehabilitative approaches, recognizing adolescents as a vulnerable group entitled to legal protection, healthcare, and education. Conceptual frameworks such as the Integrated Model of Juvenile Justice support this shift by highlighting the need for public-health, socio-ecological, and restorative justice integration to promote equitable and context-sensitive interventions (April et al., 2023).

The current legal framework particularly Law No. 35 of 2009 on Narcotics provides space for rehabilitation through Articles 127 and 54. Yet in reality, poor law-enforcement commitment, insufficient rehabilitation facilities, and fragmented interagency coordination severely undermine implementation. Scholars argue that rehabilitative programs (e.g., multisystemic and family-based treatments) demonstrably reduce recidivism compared to punitive responses, underscoring the necessity of operationalizing these norms through robust systems integration.

One key recommendation is developing binding, operational derivative regulations that clearly outline procedures for implementing adolescent rehabilitation. This should involve a cross-sectoral approach with the Ministry of Law & Human Rights, BNN, and Ministries of Health, Social Affairs, and Education producing comprehensive intervention guidelines covering early detection to social reintegration. International best practices such as specialized drug courts and juvenile diversion programs illustrate how legal instruments, when supported by structured interagency protocols, can facilitate effective rehabilitative outcomes.

In addition to regulatory changes, the government must strengthen rehabilitation institution capacity, particularly in underserved regions. Many areas lack child-focused rehabilitation centres integrated into educational and social services. Meta-reviews confirm that restorative justice interventions and community-based rehabilitative programs produce small-to-moderate but meaningful reductions in reoffending and improve youth engagement (Gaffney et al., 2024). Implementing such interventions widely not just in urban centres could close service gaps and better align with normative legal objectives.

In the field of law enforcement, upgrading the capacity and mindset of legal practitioners is an urgent priority. Police officers, prosecutors, and judges should receive training in restorative justice, juvenile justice systems, and human rights protection. Frequently, the failure to implement rehabilitation is not due to legal gaps but rather to the persistence of outdated paradigms among law enforcement personnel who continue to view drug users primarily as criminals rather than as victims or individuals in need of medical and social support. Thus, a transformation in legal culture is a vital component of this policy reformulation.

Policy reform must also address preventive and educational aspects, which are often formalistic and fail to address the root causes of adolescent drug abuse. The National Program for Drug Prevention, Eradication, Abuse, and Illicit Trafficking (P4GN) should be expanded beyond senior high schools to include junior high schools and rural communities. Moreover, prevention strategies should involve families, religious leaders, and local communities as part of a broader social protection network for adolescents. Drug education materials must be tailored to local contexts and adolescent psychosocial development in order to be more effective in building awareness and resilience.

Legal policies must reflect a commitment to safeguarding the future of adolescents rather than punishing past mistakes. Policies that place adolescent drug users in correctional institutions tend to hinder recovery and social reintegration. Therefore, systems must be established to allow these youths to continue their education, receive skills training, and obtain psychosocial support as part of a holistic rehabilitation process.

By integrating legal, social, and health-based approaches into a single comprehensive policy, this reformulation aims to establish a drug control system that is not only punitive but also transformative. These recommendations are intended to serve as a scientific contribution to the development of legal policies that are more inclusive, humane, and just, and that effectively protect adolescents as a highly vulnerable group at risk of falling victim to drug abuse.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on an Analysis of Policy Measures for Addressing Drug Abuse Crimes Among Adolescents, it can be concluded that although Indonesia has established various regulations and programs to support prevention and rehabilitation efforts, their implementation still faces significant obstacles. The gap between legal norms and actual practices in the field, the limited capacity of rehabilitation facilities, and the lack of understanding among law enforcement officers regarding child protection-based approaches remain major challenges. Additionally, societal perceptions that prioritize punitive measures and the prevailing stigma against drug users further hinder the effectiveness of intervention efforts. The rapid development of digital technology particularly social media and online platforms also exacerbates the problem by facilitating the covert and accelerated distribution of narcotics. Therefore, it is recommended that the government develop operational regulations that comprehensively integrate legal, social, and health aspects, while also strengthening the capacity of rehabilitation institutions and law enforcement through continuous training and education. Furthermore, there must be intensive efforts to implement locally relevant educational initiatives that engage communities, families, and educational institutions to ensure more effective and sustainable prevention. Digital technologies should also be used positively through educational campaigns that actively involve adolescents and the wider community, to foster early awareness and resilience against drug abuse. With a humane, inclusive, and evidence-based approach, Indonesia's drug control system is expected to become more adaptive to socio-technological dynamics and more capable of protecting the rights and future of its youth effectively.

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