

## A Legal Analysis of Drug Abuse Among Teenagers

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**ABSTRACT**

This study attempts to examine criminal policies related to the drug problem in Indonesia, especially among adolescents. The author employs a qualitative research method and a juridical-normative approach by studying information from library sources through legal documents, covering both Class I and Class II substances. This study applies a descriptive-analytical approach, in which the descriptive method is used in the initial stage to present argumentation, while the analytical method is used to determine the extent of the gap between legal values and norms in theory and in legal practice. Accordingly, this research is classified as normative research. The study shows that criminal policy measures in Cirebon City have a fairly sound legal basis, grounded in Law Number 35 of 2009, Law Number 11 of 2012, and Cirebon City Regional Regulation Number 11 of 2023. Policy steps are described in terms of those that regulate criminal acts, as well as those that address non-criminal approaches, integrated in the form of rehabilitation, diversion, restorative justice, and prevention programs in families, schools, and communities. However, these measures must be improved, particularly in terms of consistency in the operationalization of field assessments concerning the best interests of adolescent development and rehabilitation.

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### INTRODUCTION

One of the most serious crimes affecting young people is drug abuse. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent among adolescents, an age group still developing physically, psychologically, and socially. They are highly curious and emotionally unstable. Because of these characteristics, and the fact that adolescents are easily influenced by their environment, they are highly vulnerable to drug abuse.

The effects of drug abuse not only harm adolescents' physical health through organ damage and the risk of developing substance use disorders, but also their mental health through emotional disturbances, behavioral changes, and difficulties with concentration. Furthermore, drug abuse can hinder adolescents' cognitive development and educational success, thus having both immediate and long-term impacts on the future quality of society's human resources (Davidson et al., 2015; Mooney-Leber & Gould, 2018). Drug abuse also carries sociological and legal consequences, such as increased socially deviant behavior, criminal activity, and the deterioration of family and social relationships (Mehrabi et al., 2016; Oguntayo et al., 2020; Paul et al., 2024).

According to the Cirebon City National Narcotics Agency, adolescents and students are among the populations most at risk of drug abuse in the city. Between 2019 and October 2020, 75 drug abusers were processed and rehabilitated, the majority of whom were students, second

only to workers. This situation indicates that the educational environment is not immune to the dangers of drug abuse. In 2024, through the Integrated Assessment Team (TAT) of the Cirebon City National Narcotics Agency (BNNK), the number of drug abusers in Cirebon City reached 86.

During this period, methamphetamine, marijuana, putau, and other illegal substances were the most frequently abused narcotics (Bhanujirao et al., 2022; Predescu et al., 2025). The 11–20 age group was among the most affected, highlighting that early to late adolescence is the most vulnerable period for drug exposure. This further underscores the inadequacy of drug control policies in Cirebon City, and demonstrates that law enforcement must be complemented by stronger prevention and rehabilitation measures that more systematically target adolescents through educational institutions, families, and their social environments.

This situation is reflected at the regional level, including in the city of Cirebon. Cirebon is one of the strategically located urban areas in West Java Province. However, the city faces serious challenges in combating drug abuse due to its position along key trade and transportation routes, including road and port access, which poses a significant threat in terms of narcotics distribution (Aravind & SB, 2023; Belhabib et al., 2020). This creates the potential for the entry and expansion of narcotics networks, including among youth communities, requiring integrated and sustainable prevention and response efforts (Fishbein & Sloboda, 2023; Gondal et al., 2025; Silalahi & Boiliu, 2026).

The Cirebon Police Narcotics Investigation Unit (Satresnarkoba) has successfully resolved several criminal cases related to the distribution of Class I narcotics such as methamphetamine and the illegal distribution of pharmaceutical drugs without a permit. Cirebon Police Chief, Commissioner Sumarni, stated that in December 2022, law enforcement successfully uncovered a major case of illegal narcotics and pharmaceutical drug distribution. The perpetrators employed transaction methods typical of drug-related crimes, such as cash on delivery (COD) and face-to-face meetings at pre-agreed locations to avoid detection by law enforcement. In light of these actions, the suspects were charged under the provisions of Article 114 paragraphs (1) and (2) and Article 112 paragraphs (1) and (2) of Law Number 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics. The criminal penalties for this offense include life imprisonment or a minimum of six years and a maximum of twenty years of imprisonment, along with a criminal fine of no less than IDR 1 billion and no more than IDR 13 billion.

Within the framework of criminal law policy, the handling of drug abuse among adolescents is systematically regulated under Law Number 5 of 1997 concerning Psychotropics and Law Number 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics, with a focus on law enforcement, rehabilitation, and prevention. While these laws are theoretically binding, a purely repressive approach appears suboptimal given the factors of easy access to substances, low awareness among adolescents, and limited rehabilitation facilities that are seemingly insufficient to accommodate the number of active adolescent abusers.

Therefore, this situation requires further analysis of local criminal policy. One example is the policy framework in Cirebon City, as stipulated in Regional Regulation No. 11 of 2023, which represents a distinctive policy establishing preventive measures for adolescents. Accordingly, this study aims to examine criminal policy regulations regarding drug abuse among adolescents in Cirebon City and to provide recommendations to local law enforcement institutions in the form of a regional regulation that upholds integrative prevention.

Adolescent drug abuse not only compromises individual health but also affects social structures and economic development. Studies indicate that early initiation into drug use correlates with poor educational outcomes, increased school dropout rates, and a higher likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior (Echazu & Nocetti, 2019). These impacts highlight a critical challenge for policymakers worldwide: balancing legal enforcement with preventive, rehabilitative, and educational strategies that mitigate early exposure to narcotics and other psychoactive substances.

Indonesia faces a notable challenge in this regard, particularly within urban and strategically located regions such as Cirebon City. Between 2019 and 2024, the Integrated Assessment Team (TAT) of the Cirebon City National Narcotics Agency (BNNK) reported 86 cases of adolescent drug abuse, with methamphetamine, marijuana, and putau being the most commonly consumed substances (BNN, 2025b). The 11–20 age group appears most affected, reflecting a critical developmental window during which intervention can significantly reduce lifetime substance dependence.

Despite national legislation — including Law No. 35 of 2009 on Narcotics and Law No. 11 of 2012 on Juvenile Criminal Justice — the application of these regulations remains inconsistent at the local level. Empirical observations reveal gaps in early prevention programs, rehabilitation services, and non-penal strategies, particularly within schools and family environments, leading to sustained vulnerability among adolescents (Rusdiyanto et al., 2024). These findings underscore the necessity for locally tailored policies that complement national frameworks with community-based preventive measures.

Previous research has examined the legal and criminological dimensions of adolescent drug abuse, highlighting the importance of restorative justice, diversion programs, and rehabilitation as alternatives to purely punitive approaches (Albar, 2022; Putri & Susilawati, 2025). While these studies provide valuable insights, they often focus on national policy frameworks without evaluating implementation effectiveness in specific regional contexts. In Cirebon City, there remains limited evidence on how local regulations, such as Regional Regulation No. 11 of 2023, operationalize non-penal measures to protect adolescents from narcotics exposure.

This research addresses a critical gap by analyzing the practical application of criminal and non-penal policies in preventing adolescent drug abuse in Cirebon City. Unlike prior studies, which emphasize theoretical legal frameworks, this investigation incorporates field-level data and institutional reports to evaluate how policies are enforced and where operational inconsistencies hinder effectiveness. Such an approach contributes to bridging the gap between legal norms and their real-world outcomes.

The urgency of this study is further reinforced by socio-environmental and technological factors that facilitate adolescents' access to drugs. Peer influence, parental supervision deficits, and the exploitation of social media by drug distribution networks amplify the risk of early substance initiation (Adhani & Anshori, 2018). Addressing these dynamics requires a comprehensive policy evaluation that integrates law enforcement, educational outreach, family involvement, and community participation to create sustainable preventive strategies.

The novelty of this research lies in its combined legal and socio-environmental perspective, examining both statutory frameworks and community-level factors affecting adolescent drug use. By focusing on the localized context of Cirebon City, the study provides

empirical evidence on how regional regulations translate into actionable programs and preventive mechanisms, offering insights applicable to similar urban settings across Indonesia.

The primary purpose of this research is to assess the implementation of non-penal and preventive policies, evaluate their effectiveness, identify existing barriers, and provide recommendations to strengthen adolescent protection measures. This aligns with international best practices that emphasize preventive over punitive strategies and supports Indonesia's broader goals of reducing youth involvement in narcotics while enhancing public health and educational outcomes.

Finally, the study aims to contribute to legal scholarship, public policy, and social intervention strategies. By generating actionable recommendations for law enforcement, schools, families, and local government, the research provides a foundation for designing integrative, multi-sectoral interventions that protect adolescents, reduce recidivism, and foster a safer and healthier community environment. Ultimately, these contributions support both immediate policy reform and long-term societal resilience against the pervasive risks of adolescent drug abuse.

## **METHOD**

### **Types of research**

The type of research is qualitative research. Qualitative research is a research method intended to understand and analyze a phenomenon through interpretation based on meaning and concepts, rather than to measure it with numerical values. This type of research was chosen because it focuses on the analysis of drug abuse by adolescents in the legal rights community, namely a legal perspective, which requires a comprehensive understanding of legal principles regarding the rules, principles, and consequences of their implementation on adolescents as legal subjects.

### **Types of Research Approaches**

The juridical approach used is normative or doctrinal juridical so that the focus raised in this writing is the practice of legal norms in the form of statutory regulations and legal doctrine as a basis for understanding the normative framework related to criminal policies and the handling of the abuse of dangerous goods and psychotropic plants which are addictive substances, especially among teenagers in Cirebon City. According to normative legal science, law is an independent institution, legal hypothesis is a point of view on aspects of a legal system being reviewed. In this sense, problems in a law are related to legal problems that may arise in the operations of the legal institution (Wahyuni, 2023).

### **Research Data Sources**

The research data was obtained through a literature review. The literature review consisted of primary and secondary legal materials. Primary legal materials include Law Number 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics, Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System, and Cirebon City Regional Regulation Number 11 of 2023 concerning P4GN. Secondary legal materials included legal textbooks, scientific journals based on previous research, and expert opinions discussing juvenile criminal law policies and restorative justice.

## **Legal Material Analysis**

The analysis of legal materials in this study uses a descriptive analytical method, namely by systematically describing legal provisions related to drug abuse among adolescents, then analyzing them to obtain a comprehensive understanding. The collected legal materials are analyzed by outlining the norms, principles, and policies of applicable criminal law, particularly those related to criminal policies in overcoming drug abuse among adolescents. Through this analysis, the study aims to explain the relationship between legal norms and assess the effectiveness of the implementation of criminal policies in addressing the problem of drug abuse in the adolescent community.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The policy of preventing drug abuse in Cirebon City is also strengthened through regional legal policies. This is referred to in Cirebon City Regional Regulation Number 11 of 2023 concerning the facilitation of the prevention and eradication of the abuse and illicit trafficking of narcotics and precursors of narcotic drugs and psychotropic drugs. The mandatory implementation of this regional legal policy demonstrates the regional government's seriousness in implementing national-level policies, but it remains to be seen whether there is alignment between the national policy and its application to the community in Cirebon City in eradicating the problem of youth drug abuse.

Furthermore, in addition to being clearer and more focused, this regional regulation encompasses various aspects related to drug prevention efforts, from anticipatory early prevention efforts, to combating illicit drug trafficking, to rehabilitation mechanisms for drug victims and users. This regulation clarifies the duties and authorities of the community, collaboration between institutions and agencies, and even outlines the regional government's own financial resources as an integral part of the drug strategy in Cirebon City.

Within the scope of the National Narcotics Agency or often referred to as BNN, there is an Integrated Assessment Team, namely a Joint Team consisting of BNN, Police, Prosecutors, and also a medical team or doctors. The basis for the formation of the Integrated Assessment Team includes Law No. 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics, Circular Letter of the Supreme Court No. 04 of 2010 concerning the Placement of Narcotics Abusers, Victims of Abuse and Addicts into Medical Rehabilitation and Social Rehabilitation Institutions, Regulation of the Head of the National Narcotics Agency No. 11 of 2014 concerning Procedures for Handling Suspects and/or Defendants of Narcotics Addicts and Victims of Narcotics Abuse into Rehabilitation Institutions, Regulation of the Attorney General No. 29 of 2015 concerning Technical Guidelines for Handling Narcotics Addicts and Victims of Narcotics Abuse into Rehabilitation Institutions and Regulation of the Ministry of Health No. 50 of 2015 concerning Technical Guidelines for the Implementation of Mandatory Reporting and Medical Rehabilitation for narcotics abusers and victims of abuse.

As a Cirebon City Regional Regulation Number 11 of 2023, its primary objective is to establish a clear foundation and reference for the local government in carrying out its facilitation function in preventing and eradicating narcotics abuse and illicit trafficking. Furthermore, it establishes a foundation and reference for the local government to develop integrated policies and programs in an effort to create a community environment free from the influence of narcotics. The scope of this objective is highly relevant to youth issues because

adolescents are the group most commonly affected and significantly exposed and require a preventive and educational approach.

Based on the above facts, it can be concluded that the Cirebon City Government's implementation of criminal policy through Regional Regulations (Perda) is carried out through a multi-sectoral and integrated approach. This approach places drug control not solely on law enforcement but also on an integrated network of security forces, institutions, educational institutions, health institutions, and other elements of society. The policy aspects developed within the framework of Cirebon City Regulation Number 11 of 2023 consist of several key areas: prevention and self-preservation, enforcement and eradication, and the provision of medical services and social rehabilitation.

According to the criminal policy theory proposed by GP Hoefnagels, crime prevention is not only carried out through penal means (criminal law), but also through non-penal means that emphasize efforts to prevent crime before it occurs. In the context of drug abuse among adolescents in Cirebon City, the implementation of Cirebon City Regional Regulation Number 11 of 2023 demonstrates the application of a non-penal approach through socialization, education, the formation of an anti-drug task force, and strengthening the role of families and schools. This approach is in line with the concept of criminal policy, which places prevention as the primary strategy in reducing drug abuse among adolescents.

Furthermore, child protection theory emphasizes that adolescent drug abusers are not merely viewed as perpetrators of criminal acts, but also as victims in need of protection and rehabilitation. Therefore, medical and social rehabilitation policies, as stipulated in Law Number 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics, serve as a form of legal protection aimed at restoring children's physical, psychological, and social well-being.

However, criminal sanctions are not the only factor influencing the decline in drug abuse among adolescents. Non-penal strategies that focus on prevention and preventive measures, specifically non-penal measures implemented before a crime occurs, are inherently preventive and proactive (Ardana et al., 2024). Non-penal measures, as the name suggests, encompass a number of requirements or prerequisites. These include training, peer support, anti-drug education at various levels of education, involving family members as the closest support unit in the current environment, and raising their awareness of the existence of narcotics, psychotropic substances, and alcohol (NAPZA) through civic education. The Regency National Narcotics Agency (BNNK), local government, schools, and community groups are working together to implement this non-penal policy in Cirebon City.

Article 6 Paragraph (1) of Cirebon City Regional Regulation Number 11 of 2023 discusses early prevention measures that need to be taken. These measures are based on the regional government's obligation to take all forms of early prevention measures to stop the abuse and illicit trafficking of narcotics and narcotic raw materials. Early prevention is as referred to in Article 6 Paragraph (2). 1) Activities to detect problems early; 2) Carrying out urine tests in government offices; 3) Anti-drug task forces or volunteers who are members of the National Narcotics Prevention and Control Program (P4GN); 4) Providing information to the public through mass media, campaigns, advertisements, and warning boards in locations that are easily accessible to the public. These efforts show that the regional government is also implementing Article 6 paragraph 3 of this policy, which provides coordination training to help implement the policy in the field. Thus, prevention efforts can be carried out properly.

Article 8, paragraph 1, emphasizes that the preventive measures referred to in that paragraph also apply. This article states that several programs are used to stop drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking. These include campaigns to increase public literacy and awareness, task forces and anti-drug units, and the Bersinar program for residential areas and schools. There are four main parts of the program that affect the general population and the younger generation, thus generating high levels of participation.

Article 9, paragraph 1, outlines how to reach the community and share information, and how to do so. These provisions include seminars, workshops, discussions, forums, interactive dialogues, receptions for conferences organized by religions, environmental and social events, cultural performances and activities, including works of art and culture, outdoor activities and sports, camps and jamborees, events held at educational institutions, and competitions. All of these are non-penal policy measures that attempt to be understood from various aspects of knowledge, while simultaneously relating to the social and psychological nature of adolescents.

Legal certainty is one of the primary objectives of law, as stated by Gustav Radbruch. In the context of combating drug abuse, legal certainty is realized through legislation that clearly regulates prohibitions, criminal sanctions, and rehabilitation mechanisms for drug abusers.

Legal certainty regarding drug abuse in Indonesia is regulated in Law Number 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics. Article 127 paragraph (1) stipulates that those who abuse narcotics themselves can be punished according to the class of narcotics used. However, Article 54 emphasizes that drug addicts and victims of drug abuse are required to undergo medical and social rehabilitation.

At the regional level, Cirebon City Regional Regulation No. 11 of 2023 provides legal certainty through regulations regarding prevention, eradication, rehabilitation, and community participation in P4GN efforts. This regulation provides the public and law enforcement officials with clear guidelines for handling drug abuse cases involving adolescents.

From a modern criminal law perspective, drug abuse is considered an extraordinary crime due to its widespread impact on public health, family resilience, and the quality of human resources. Therefore, its prevention requires not only a repressive approach through criminalization, but also preventive and rehabilitative approaches.

The concept of restorative justice is also a crucial component in the treatment of adolescent drug abusers. This approach aims to restore the well-being of victims and perpetrators through rehabilitation and social reintegration, enabling adolescents to return to normal social functioning in society.

However, this non-penal policy has not been effective enough because it is still too lenient and encourages drug abusers to relapse. Furthermore, the results obtained are not significant and sustainable, especially among adolescents. Based on rehabilitation data from the Cirebon City National Narcotics Agency (BNN) from 2019 to October 2020, students are the second largest group of drug users. After working-age students, students are the second largest group of drug users after university students and the unemployed. In Cirebon City alone, there have been 75 cases of drug abuse over the past two years, with 39 cases in 2019. In 2024, through the Integrated Assessment Team (TAT) of the Cirebon City National Narcotics Agency (BNNK), the number of drug abusers in Cirebon City reached 86. Drug use also varies, including methamphetamine, marijuana, putau, and other illegal drugs. The age group 21–30

years old is the most common age group seen. However, the number of suspects aged 11–20 years is also quite high, and most of the perpetrators are still students (Sanjaya, 2020).

Data shows that adolescents and students themselves are still victims of drugs. This data suggests that drug policy should not only address the consequences of drug use, but also include prevention efforts to prevent people from using drugs at a young age, using the best prevention methods. At the individual level, prevention should not only be carried out ceremonially, but also address the mental, emotional, and social aspects of adolescents themselves. Adolescents who become victims of the drug trade are often due to parental inattention, high rates of sexual harassment, and weak social supervision (Adhani & Anshori, 2018). Therefore, non-penal factors themselves are the actual factors that make victims, among these factors, far stronger in their role. If victim factors, family factors, school quality, and community control are strengthened, the impact of this policy will be significant.

In 2026, police and the National Narcotics Agency (BNN) continued to uncover several cases of drug abuse involving teenagers and students. One case of concern was the uncovering of a drug trafficking network that utilized social media for transactions and the recruitment of new users among students. This modus operandi demonstrates that advances in information technology have influenced drug trafficking patterns, making them increasingly difficult to monitor.

Prevention efforts against adolescent drug abuse cannot rely solely on law enforcement; they must be complemented by strategies such as digital surveillance, legal literacy education, and enhanced supervision by families and schools. Several factors contribute to the rising incidence of drug abuse among teenagers. The social environment and peer groups often encourage experimentation with narcotics, while inadequate parental supervision and weak family structures fail to provide effective moral guidance and oversight of adolescents' activities. Additionally, the ease of access to information through social media is frequently exploited by drug distribution networks to promote and facilitate covert transactions. Many teenagers also demonstrate a limited understanding of the law and the dangers associated with narcotics use, while psychological factors—such as stress, depression, identity crises, and the desire for social recognition—further increase vulnerability.

From a normative perspective, the prohibition on the possession, control, and distribution of narcotics in Indonesia is clearly regulated through several legal provisions. Article 111 of Law Number 35 of 2009 addresses the illegal possession of narcotics, while Articles 112 and 114 regulate the control and distribution of such substances. Article 127 focuses on the consequences for narcotics abuse, and Article 54 emphasizes the legal obligation to provide rehabilitation for drug addicts and victims of substance abuse. Together, these laws form a comprehensive framework that supports both punitive measures and rehabilitative interventions, aiming to protect adolescents from the multifaceted risks of drug abuse.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis of the research on drug abuse among adolescents in Cirebon City, it can be concluded that adolescent drug abuse remains a significant social and legal challenge, requiring an integrated approach beyond punitive measures. While national and regional laws, such as Law Number 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics and Cirebon City Regional Regulation Number 11 of 2023, provide a solid legal framework, the effectiveness of these regulations

depends heavily on implementation. Preventive efforts, including socialization, education, family involvement, and school-based supervision, have demonstrated potential in mitigating early exposure, yet inconsistencies and limited resources constrain their impact. Furthermore, the prevalence of drug use among students highlights the urgency of combining legal enforcement with non-penal strategies, such as rehabilitation, restorative justice, and proactive community participation.

For future research, it is suggested to explore longitudinal studies that assess the long-term effectiveness of integrated non-penal interventions in reducing adolescent drug abuse across diverse urban contexts. Investigations into the role of digital platforms in drug distribution and prevention, as well as the psychological and social determinants influencing adolescent vulnerability, could offer deeper insights for targeted policy development. Additionally, comparative studies evaluating regional differences in law enforcement, rehabilitation access, and family–school–community collaboration could inform more tailored strategies, enhancing the sustainability and effectiveness of youth-oriented drug prevention programs.

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