

VICTIMOLOGY ANALYSIS OF THE VULNERABILITY OF STREET CHILDREN AS VICTIMS OF DRUG ABUSE IN KARAWANG REGENCY

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Abstract

The increasing incidence of drug abuse among street children in Karawang Regency has become a serious social and legal concern. As a vulnerable group, street children often fall victim to drug exploitation due to the absence of family supervision and their exposure to high-risk environments. This study aims to analyze the victimological factors that make street children vulnerable to drug abuse and to interpret this phenomenon through the Lifestyle Exposure theory. Using an empirical juridical method, this research combines normative analysis of legal regulations with field studies through interviews with street children, law enforcement officials, the National Narcotics Agency of Karawang Regency, and social institutions. The findings reveal that economic hardship, social pressure, and a lack of legal awareness significantly contribute to children's exposure to drugs. In the context of Lifestyle Exposure theory, their street-based lifestyle increases the likelihood of contact with perpetrators and risky situations. Legally, these children qualify as potential victims requiring special protection. Therefore, integrated efforts between government institutions, law enforcement, and the community are urgently needed to strengthen prevention, protection, and rehabilitation mechanisms for street children affected by drug abuse.

Keyword: *Drug Abuse, Legal Protection, Lifestyle Exposure Theory, Street Children, Victimology, Vulnerability.*

A. INTRODUCTION

The rise in drug abuse in Indonesia demonstrates that this problem is not merely a criminal issue, but also a public health and social protection

issue.¹ One social group particularly vulnerable to drug abuse is street children.² Street children generally live in unstable economic conditions, have low levels of education, have minimal family supervision, and frequently interact in environments prone to crime and drug abuse.³ They are often trapped in situations of exploitation, both economically and socially, which can ultimately lead to drug abuse as a means of escape from the pressures of life.⁴ The Karawang Regency Social Services Agency even lists street children as a group with the highest level of social vulnerability requiring special intervention and protection.⁵

The Indonesian Constitution affirms its commitment to protecting children living on the streets through Article 28B of the 1945 Constitution, which states that every child has a fundamental right to continued existence, growth, and development, and is entitled to protection from violence and discrimination. This constitutional basis is reinforced by Article 34 of the 1945 Constitution, which mandates that the care of poor and neglected children is the responsibility of the state. Further implementation is outlined in specific regulations, namely Child Protection Law Number 35 of 2014, a revision of Law Number 23 of 2002, specifically Article 67, which stipulates that special protection for children who are victims of substance abuse is implemented through strategies of supervision, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation.⁶

Despite the comprehensive legal framework, empirical reality on the ground shows that many street children remain vulnerable to drug abuse, particularly in Karawang Regency. The streets are home to millions of children worldwide, who endure hardship and injustice while struggling to survive. The term "street children" refers to individuals who spend a significant portion of their time carrying out daily activities in public spaces, either to earn a living or to roam in public areas.

Indonesia, as a country that adheres to the principle of the rule of law, has regulations and provisions regarding government strategies for handling victims of drug abuse, as stipulated in Law Number 35 of 2009 concerning

¹ Vivi Riska Ramadani, "Social Impact and Challenges of Rehabilitation in Combating Drug Abuse in Indonesia," *Journal of Law, Politic and Humanities* 5, no. 3 (2025): 1639.

² Nunung Nurwati, Muhammad Fedryansyah, and Willya Achmad, "Social Policy in the Protection of Street Children in Indonesia," *Journal of Governance* 7, no. 3 (2022): 134.

³ Bambang Sunaryo, "Narcotics as a Transnational Organized Crime," *Legal Brief* 10, no. 2 (2021): 319.

⁴ Sudirman Nasir, Doreen Rosenthal, and Timothy Moore, "The Social Context of Controlled Drug Use amongst Young People in a Slum Area in Makassar, Indonesia," *International Journal of Drug Policy* 22, no. 6 (2011): 465.

⁵ Deswinta Elsa Luxiana Sechan, Muhammad Alwi Al Maliki, and Cecep Soleh Kurniawan, "Handling Narcotics and Drug Abuse in Indonesia from the Perspective of Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah," *Ma'mal: Jurnal Laboratorium Syariah dan Hukum* 7, no. 2 (2025): 123.

⁶ Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Amendments to Law Number 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection

Narcotics, Article 54 of which states that drug addicts and victims of drug abuse are required to undergo medical and social rehabilitation.⁷ This provision emphasizes that the state's approach to drug users and victims of abuse is health and social, not solely repressive or criminal. This principle aligns with the concept of victimology, which views street children as victims of social, economic, and environmental conditions.

However, the reality on the ground, particularly in Karawang Regency, shows that many street children remain vulnerable to drug abuse despite the national enforcement of the Narcotics Law. Article 54 of the Narcotics Law emphasizes an alternative to criminal sanctions for users, namely rehabilitation implemented by the National Narcotics Agency. The purpose of the Narcotics Law is to protect the wider community from the dangers of drug abuse and illicit trafficking. Under this law, all government officials are responsible for preventing, eradicating, and protecting against the threat of narcotics.

The complexity of handling drug crimes lies in their characteristic, which is not carried out individually, but rather in a structured and organized manner within specific syndicates, thus categorizing narcotics as a transnational crime.⁸ Street children who have a lifestyle in public spaces, interact with deviant peer groups, and carry out unsupervised activities have a higher risk of becoming victims.⁹ Although the government has established various regulations and policies to address the problem, the reality on the ground shows that vulnerable groups, particularly street children, remain trapped in the cycle of drug trafficking and abuse.¹⁰ Street children, who should receive protection and guidance, often fall victim to vulnerable social environments, economic pressures, and unhealthy lifestyles.¹¹

Karawang Regency, one of the regencies in West Java Province, is experiencing a drug emergency. This situation is evidenced by the high number of drug abuse cases, which is further exacerbated by the massive distribution of drugs in the region. Regulations regarding drug abuse are clearly stipulated in the Narcotics Law, but implementation of these regulations

⁷ Law Number 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics

⁸ Zainab Ompu Jainah, "Narcotics Crime as a Phenomenon of Transnational Organized Crime," In *International Conference on Law, Business and Governance* (Lampung: ICon-LBG, 2013).

⁹ Rendi Prayuda, Tulus Warsito, and Surwandono Surwandono, "Narcotics Smuggling Routes in the Southeast Asia Region (Case Study in the Riau Province, Indonesia)," *Security Dimensions* 30, no. 30 (2019): 125.

¹⁰ Daniel R. Lee and Carly M. Hilinski-Rosick, "The Role of Lifestyle and Personal Characteristics on Fear of Victimization among University Students," *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 37, no. 4 (2012): 654.

¹¹ Joko Setiyono, "Integrated Policy Management of Narcotics Trafficking as Transnational Organized Crime in Indonesia," *Diponegoro Law Review* 5, no. 2 (2020): 269.

is arguably less than optimal, given that many street children still abuse drugs, and cases of drug abuse continue to increase annually.¹²

This research differs significantly from previous studies addressing drug abuse and victimology. Most previous research has focused on criminal law and law enforcement against drug abusers, such as studies on the effectiveness of Law Number 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics, law enforcement against dealers or users, and rehabilitation policies for drug abuse victims. Meanwhile, this research focuses on the victimological aspect, examining the vulnerability of street children as potential victims of drug abuse, using the Lifestyle-Exposure Theory approach. This approach provides a new perspective because it examines the risk factors of street children's lifestyles and social environments that make them more vulnerable to drug abuse.¹³

Furthermore, while previous research has generally been conducted in large urban areas such as Jakarta, Surabaya, or Medan, this study takes place in Karawang Regency, a geographically industrial area with unique social dynamics. This situation provides a new contribution to understanding how industrial environments and urbanization influence street children's vulnerability to drug abuse. The difference between the author's research and previous research is proven by the existence of specific data from the Karawang Police Narcotics Research Unit, which shows that the number of cases of narcotics abuse against street children has increased quite a lot from year to year.

The data from the Karawang Police Narcotics Investigation Unit (2021–August 2025) show a steady increase in drug abuse cases among street children, from 47 cases in 2021 to 70 in 2025. This consistent rise illustrates the growing vulnerability of street children to drug-related crimes and reflects the failure of social and legal protection mechanisms in the region. Investigators explain that the main contributing factor is the rapid advancement of social media technology, which enables drug dealers to conduct transactions and recruit victims more easily. Through online platforms, dealers build trust with children by offering drugs for free, creating psychological and physical dependence before turning them into regular users or small-scale distributors. This pattern reveals a deliberate and systematic exploitation of children, as dealers take advantage of lenient legal sanctions and the prioritization of child cases in the judicial system. Consequently, the

¹² D. Susilo, D. Putranto, C. Julian, and S. Navarro, "Indonesian Criminal Code about Drugs and Narcotics: Justice and Media Por-trayal" 7, no. 4 (2022): 225.

¹³ Azmawati Mohammed Nawi Rozmi Ismail, Fauziah Ibrahim, Mohd Rohaizat Hassan, Mohd Rizal Abdul Manaf, Noh Amit, Norhayati Ibrahim, and Nurul Shafini Shafurdin, "Risk and Protective Factors of Drug Abuse among Adolescents: A Systematic Review," *BMC Public Health* 21, no. 1 (2021): 2088.

phenomenon not only highlights the escalation of drug abuse among minors but also underscores the urgent need for integrated legal, technological, and social interventions to protect street children from digital-based drug networks.

Although they don't meet face-to-face, dealers easily persuade children, especially street children who spend most of their time on the streets, to engage in drug abuse through social media. The most frequently used drugs are methamphetamine and synthetic tobacco. The vulnerability of street children to drug abuse is influenced by their lifestyle of hanging out in groups on the streets until late at night, and the influence of peers, because if there is one person who uses drugs, then their peers will also use it in order to be accepted in their group environment.¹⁴ ¹⁵Street children cannot control themselves because they depend on group life patterns that tend to follow their peers, plus the lack of parental supervision so that street children can become victims of drug abuse due to the crimes of dealers.¹⁶

Field observations and questionnaires conducted with street children in Karawang Regency indicate that 80% of respondents admitted to being familiar with narcotics, either through personal experience or interactions with their environment. This fact indicates that drug abuse among street children is not merely a potential issue, but a real, widespread phenomenon. The 80% figure is a very high proportion, considering that street children are a group that should be protected by the state through existing regulations, such as Law Number 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics and Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection.

This high rate of drug exposure raises two important issues. First, the vulnerability of street children's social environment.¹⁷ Street children live in public spaces with minimal supervision, making them vulnerable to negative influences, including drug exposure. Lifestyle Exposure Theory explains that individuals who frequently encounter high-risk situations or environments are more likely to become victims of crime or social deviance. The fact that 80% of street children are familiar with drugs demonstrates the strong influence of environmental and social factors.¹⁸ Second, there is a gap in the

¹⁴ Yahya Muhammed Bah, "Drug abuse among street children," *Journal of Clinical Research in HIV AIDS and Prevention* 3, no. 3 (2018): 21.

¹⁵ Anju Dhawan, Ashwani Kumar Mishra, Biswadip Chatterjee, Gayatri Bhatia, Atul Ambekar, Alok Agarwal, Rachna Bhargava, and Anita Chopra, "Characteristics Associated with Substance Use and Non-use among Street Children in Delhi, India: A Community-based Cross-sectional Epidemiological Study," *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine* 46, no. 1 (2024): 47.

¹⁶ Interview with Brigadier Ircham Khumaini, S.Pd., August 2025, 14.00 WIB.

¹⁷ Zeleniak Polina, Nataly Kulakova, Stanislav Mozol, Volodymyr Dordiai, and Nataliya Mozol, "Victimology: Prevention of Crimes against the Life and Health of a Child," *Cuestiones Políticas* 3, no. 9 (2020): 64.

¹⁸ UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2012: Children in an Urban World* (Navi Mumbai: Esocialsciences, 2012), 90.

implementation of regulations and protection programs. The state has mandated rehabilitation (Article 54 of the Narcotics Law) and special protection for street children (Article 59 of the Child Protection Law).¹⁹ The high rate of drug introductions demonstrates that preventive and rehabilitative policies have not been optimally implemented in Karawang Regency.²⁰

To understand the roots of this vulnerability, this study utilized the Lifestyle-Exposure Theory developed by Hindelang et al.²¹ This theory explains that an individual's lifestyle and routines play a significant role in determining the extent to which a person is exposed to risky situations that can lead to crime. Daily activity patterns, social interactions, and the environment in which a person operates are factors that increase the probability of exposure to dangers, including drug abuse.²² In the context of street children in Karawang Regency, this theory is used to examine how the routines of life on the street, interactions with peer groups, and limited access to social facilities increase their chances of becoming victims of drug abuse.²³

In the context of street children, lifestyle exposure theory provides a framework for analyzing how street living conditions characterized by housing instability, limited access to basic services, and exposure to high-risk environments create elevated vulnerability to drug victimization. This approach recognizes that the lifestyle chosen (or more precisely, imposed by circumstances) by street children is not the result of a completely free, rational choice, but rather is constrained by structural factors beyond their control.²⁴ ²⁵ ²⁶ Based on this background, this research is important to examine the vulnerability of street children in Karawang Regency from a victimology

¹⁹ Zeleniak Polina, Nataly Kulakova, Stanislav Mozol, Volodymyr Dordiai, and Nataliya Mozol, "Victimology: Prevention of Crimes against the Life and Health of a Child," *Cuestiones Políticas* 3, no. 9 (2020): 64.

²⁰ Bonnie S. Fisher, ed., *Encyclopedia of Victimology and Crime Prevention*, vol. 1 (London: Sage, 2010), 23.

²¹ Michael J. Hindelang, Michael R. Gottfredson, and James Garofalo, *Victims of Personal Crime: An Empirical Foundation for a Theory of Personal Victimization*, (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1978), 89.

²² Jacki Tapley and Pamela Davies, "Victimology: A Conversion of Narratives," In *Victimology: Research, Policy and Activism*, (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 8.

²³ Lonnie Embleton, Ann Mwangi, Rachel Vreeman, David Ayuku, and Paula Braitstein, "The Epidemiology of Substance Use among Street Children in Resource-Constrained Settings: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *Addiction* 108, no. 10 (2013): 1728.

²⁴ I. Wayan Budha Yasa, Dewa Gede Sudika Mangku, and Ni Putu Rai Yulianti, "Tinjauan Viktimologi Terhadap Penyalahgunaan Narkotika oleh Anak di Kabupaten Buleleng," *Jurnal Komunitas Yustisia* 5, no. 1 (2022): 24.

²⁵ Anisa Rahma Dianti and Hery Firmansyah, "Tinjauan Viktimologi Terhadap Anak dalam Tindak Pidana Penyalahgunaan Narkotika," *Unes Law Review* 6, no. 1 (2023): 1539.

²⁶ Volodymyr Shablysty, Andriy Kovalenko, Anastasiia Hetman, and Roman Kvasha, "Victimological Measures to Prevent Violent Offences for Gain Committed by Children," *Cuestiones Políticas* 38, no. 6 (2020): 65.

perspective and to link it to the Lifestyle Exposure theory, so that it can provide a comprehensive picture of the factors causing vulnerability, and the prevention and mitigation efforts that can be carried out.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses an empirical juridical research design, often referred to as sociological legal research, namely research that examines the application of law in social reality. This approach not only examines applicable legal norms but also looks at their effectiveness and implementation in the field. Through this design, researchers seek to understand how legal provisions on child protection and prevention of drug abuse are applied to street children in Karawang Regency, and the extent to which these regulations are able to protect them as potential victims of drug abuse. In this study, several legal approaches were used, namely: a normative juridical approach, which is used to examine laws and regulations related to child protection and narcotics crimes, such as: Law Number 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics, Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection, Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Narcotics Agency Number 6 of 2020 concerning the Organization and Work Procedures of the Provincial National Narcotics Agency and the Regency/City National Narcotics Agency as well as regional policies of Karawang Regency regarding the handling of street children. The empirical (sociological) juridical approach was then used to examine the effectiveness of the law's implementation in the community. Primary data was collected through interviews, observation, and documentation with street children, police officers (the Karawang Police Narcotics Unit), the Karawang Regency National Narcotics Agency, the Social Services Agency, and social institutions that handle street children. Furthermore, a conceptual approach was used, examining relevant theoretical concepts, such as victimology and Lifestyle Exposure theory, to explain the relationship between street children's lifestyles and their vulnerability to drug abuse.

Data types and sources were obtained from primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through direct interviews with respondents, including street children, National Narcotics Agency officers, police officers, and social institutions. Secondary data included primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials, including: Primary legal materials, namely laws and regulations related to narcotics and child protection. Secondary legal materials included literature, books, journals, and previous research results. Tertiary legal materials included legal dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other supporting sources. The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis, which systematically describes the data and connects applicable theories and laws with empirical facts on the ground. The results were then interpreted to identify gaps between norms and practices and provide

applicable recommendations for the legal protection of street children from drug abuse.

This methodological framework enables the researcher to comprehensively assess the alignment between legal norms and their practical implementation in protecting street children from drug abuse. By combining normative, empirical, and conceptual approaches, the study not only evaluates the effectiveness of existing laws but also proposes improvements for a more integrated and victim-oriented legal protection system.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Vulnerability Factors of Street Children to Drug Abuse Associated with Lifestyle-Exposure Theory

Theoretically, this study uses the Lifestyle-Exposure Theory primarily developed by Hindelang et al.²⁷ as a framework to understand how an individual's lifestyle patterns, daily routines, and social networks can increase or decrease the probability of exposure to criminal risk, in this context, the risk of becoming a drug user or victim. This theory is relevant for analyzing how the daily practices of street children influence their chances of interacting with drug traffickers. Based on direct observation and questionnaire research, it was revealed that most street children in Karawang Regency were exposed to drugs even before reaching adulthood. This situation reinforces the importance of analyzing the elements that influence this vulnerability.

Various theories have been developed to provide plausible explanations for the differences in an individual's risk of becoming a victim of crime. One of the most important theories in explaining this is the lifestyle-exposure theory. The Lifestyle-Exposure Theory was initially introduced by three researchers named Hindelang et al.²⁸ in their scientific paper entitled "Personal Crime Victimization: An Empirical Basis for a Theory of Personal Victimization." The victimization patterns found in this publication revealed that individuals have demographic differences and their likelihood of experiencing victimization is related to differences in the lifestyles of those victims.²⁹

Differences in demographic characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, age, education level, occupation, income, social standing, and marital status have given individuals specific roles that require adaptation, despite various

²⁷ Michael J. Hindelang, Michael R. Gottfredson, and James Garofalo, *Victims of Personal Crime: An Empirical Foundation for a Theory of Personal Victimization*, (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1978), 34.

²⁸ Michael J. Hindelang, Michael R. Gottfredson, and James Garofalo, *Victims of Personal Crime: An Empirical Foundation for a Theory of Personal Victimization*, (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1978), 38.

²⁹ Bradford W. Reynolds, "Being Pursued Online: Extent and Nature of Cyberstalking Victimization from a Lifestyle/Routine Activities Perspective" (PhD diss., University of Cincinnati, 2010).

factors limiting their decision-making, known as structural barriers. Therefore, a person's lifestyle is expected to align with the roles and structural barriers they find themselves in, consistent with their demographic characteristics.³⁰

According to this theory, a person's likelihood of becoming a victim depends heavily on their lifestyle. People with certain demographic profiles are more vulnerable to crime because their lifestyles create risky situations.³¹ With certain lifestyle patterns and repeated behaviors, a person is exposed to situations that pose a high risk of becoming a victim of crime. The Lifestyle Exposure Theory explains that a person's vulnerability to crime depends heavily on their lifestyle and falls under the category of Opportunity Theory, which implies that a person has opportunities and chances in daily life that can lead them to commit a crime.³²

This concept, also known as crime risk factors, emphasizes that a person's lifestyle and activities play a key role in increasing an individual's exposure and increasing the likelihood of a crime.³³ This theory focuses on the likelihood that an individual will be in a particular place at a particular time, under different conditions, and interact with certain people.³⁴ The likelihood of becoming a victim increases when individuals with certain lifestyles begin to spend time in public spaces and frequently interact with strangers at night. Lifestyle then becomes important because it increases the exposure of potential victims to certain boundaries that could prevent them from engaging in crime. Based on an in-depth analysis of the conditions of street children in Karawang Regency, the author identified six main factors of vulnerability that interact and reinforce each other.³⁵

The social environmental aspect constitutes a primary determinant, as street children spend a significant portion of their lives in public spaces such as streets, transportation terminals, traditional markets, and other communal areas. Consequently, their in-depth interactions with peers exhibiting deviant behaviors substantially elevate the risk of drug use. Moreover, environments saturated with illicit activities including drug trafficking and various forms of

³⁰ Bradford W. Reynolds, "Being Pursued Online: Extent and Nature of Cyberstalking Victimization from a Lifestyle/Routine Activities Perspective" (PhD diss., University of Cincinnati, 2010).

³¹ Assyifa Mahend Zaradiva and Wenny Megawati, "Perlindungan Hukum terhadap Eksploitasi Anak Jalanan (Studi Kasus di Dinas Sosial Kota Semarang)," *Unes Journal of Swara Justisia* 7, no. 3 (2023): 859.

³² Robert F. Meier and Terance D. Miethe, "Understanding Theories of Criminal Victimization," *Crime and Justice* 17 (1993): 464.

³³ Mohsen Bayat and Hossein Gholami, "Victimological Analysis of Homeless People Victimization," *Criminal Law Research* 15, no. 29 (2024): 38.

³⁴ Rudi Heimann, "Victimology: The Process of Becoming a Victim," in *Violence Prevention in Education, School, and Club*, (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2022), 49.

³⁵ Karina Ayu Ningtyas, "Hubungan Antara Pola Penggunaan Situs Jejaring Sosial Facebook dengan Kerentanan Viktimisasi Cyber Harrasment pada Anak," *lib. ui. ac. id* 3, no. 4 (2012): 343.

crime markedly increase exposure to narcotics.³⁶ Thus, the routine activities of street children in these spaces, coupled with direct interactions with drug traffickers, heighten the likelihood of encountering offers of illicit substances. The author's analysis further elucidates that these social environmental factors engender "high-risk zones" which persistently shape behavioral patterns, fostering habituation to deviant conduct and diminishing perceptions of drug use as hazardous.³⁷

In addition, the economic aspect plays a pivotal role, given that street children predominantly originate from families facing severe economic constraints or lacking parental figures altogether. As a result, the imperative to meet pressing survival needs compels them to pursue rapid income sources, even through illicit means such as drug delivery or begging. Furthermore, drug trafficking networks exploit this vulnerability by offering cash or narcotics as remuneration. Hence, economic instability propels street children toward high-risk activities that facilitate greater access to drugs. The author contends that these economic pressures perpetuate a "vicious cycle of poverty," trapping individuals in a dilemma between survival necessities and the perils of illicit engagement, thereby positioning them as both victims and potential perpetrators within drug distribution networks.

Furthermore, the aspect of education and access to information is critically deficient, since most street children have abandoned formal schooling, resulting in profoundly limited awareness of drug abuse dangers and consequences.³⁸ Consequently, the absence of robust health education and counseling programs renders them susceptible to misinformation, such as the misconception that drugs confer "false happiness" or alleviate life's burdens. Thus, this informational deficit drives unhealthy behavioral choices and amplifies victimization risks. The author's analysis reveals that such educational gaps produce an "information vacuum" readily filled by erroneous narratives from their social milieu, while the dearth of health and legal knowledge impedes accurate risk evaluation in the face of drug offers.

Moreover, family aspects and supervision systems are markedly inadequate, as the majority of street children lack effective parental oversight. For those retaining family ties, strained or conflict-laden relationships invariably propel them toward street life. In turn, the void in familial social

³⁶ Arelys Madero-Hernandez, "Lifestyle Exposure Theory of Victimization," *The Encyclopedia of Women and Crime* (2019): 2

³⁷ Razieh Saberi, Ali Saffary, and Mahdie Vojdani Fakhr, "Vicarious Victimization and Its Reduction Strategies in Iran's Criminal System," *Criminal Law and Criminology Studies* 52, no. 2 (2023): 180.

³⁸ Lonnie Embleton, David Ayuku, Lukoye Atwoli, Rachel Vreeman, and Paula Braitstein, "Knowledge, Attitudes, and Substance Use Practices among Street Children in Western Kenya," *Substance Use & Misuse* 47, no. 11 (2012): 1237.

control, compounded by the absence of institutional safeguards, permits unrestricted mobility in public domains. Therefore, this supervisory deficit enables engagement in high-risk activities without preventive interventions. The author posits that familial disintegration and the lack of protective authority figures generate an "authority vacuum," eroding moral values and behavioral boundaries, thereby facilitating the penetration of external negative influences.

Additionally, psychological and emotional aspects exert profound influence, inasmuch as street children endure intense pressures including mental distress, isolation, and overwhelming life burdens, which prompt escapist recourse to drug use. Furthermore, the yearning for peer acceptance significantly shapes decision-making processes. Consequently, sustained psychological strain fosters lifestyle selections that heighten risks, such as frequent association with drug users. The author's examination demonstrates that these psychological elements function as "internal triggers," compelling destructive coping mechanisms amid the absence of supportive systems, thus cultivating a state of emotional vulnerability to adverse influences.

Finally, lifestyle factors contribute substantially, as street children adopt unstructured, highly mobile existences devoid of regulations, often in hazardous locales. For instance, nocturnal activities, habitual gatherings at bus stops, or sheltering under bridges position them in immediate proximity to drug traffickers. Accordingly, the frequency of such activities in perilous times and places escalates drug exposure risks. The author analyzes that these lifestyles engender "risk habits" which perpetually situate children in precarious conditions, while the absence of a stable, predictable routine undermines the development of defenses against threats, including drug solicitation offers.

In conclusion, the author's analysis underscores that these six factors do not function independently; rather, they interweave to form a mutually reinforcing "web of vulnerability," engendering compounded risk exposures. Consequently, this intricate interplay renders street children profoundly susceptible, necessitating comprehensive, multifaceted interventions to effectively mitigate the perils.

2. Efforts to Prevent and Overcome Drug Abuse Among Street Children in Karawang Regency

The problem of drug abuse among street children in Karawang Regency is a complex phenomenon that cannot be resolved solely through legal means. Field evidence shows that approximately 80% of street children are familiar with drugs, and most are vulnerable to becoming users due to lifestyle factors, peer pressure, and weak supervision. This situation demands multi-dimensional prevention and response efforts, encompassing legal, social, educational, and rehabilitation aspects. Indonesia already has a robust legal

framework, such as Law No. 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics, which, in Article 54, mandates rehabilitation for drug abusers, and Law No. 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection, which emphasizes the obligations of the state, local governments, and the community to protect children from all forms of abuse. However, the high rate of street children's involvement in drug use in Karawang demonstrates that these regulations have not been fully implemented.

Efforts to prevent and address drug abuse among street children in Karawang Regency are a crucial and integral part of the national narcotics management plan. The involvement of street children in drug abuse is not merely an individual issue, but also reflects a weak social protection system and environmental oversight. Research conducted through field observations and questionnaires reveals that most street children have a relatively high level of knowledge and familiarity with drugs. This situation demands the active participation of law enforcement agencies and prevention agencies, such as the Karawang Regency National Narcotics Agency and the Karawang Police Narcotics Investigation Unit, to implement strategic measures.

Based on an interview with the Head of the Prevention and Community Empowerment (P2M) Division, the Karawang Regency National Narcotics Agency plays a strategic role in preventing drug abuse through the PEPSIGN (Prevention, Eradication, and Eradication of Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking) program, which stands for Prevention, Eradication, Abuse, and Illicit Trafficking of Drugs. The agency implements several initiatives aimed specifically at protecting street children from drug exposure in Karawang Regency.

One of the main strategies involves information dissemination and counseling. Through its Support and IEC (Information, Education, and Communication) program, the agency focuses on providing knowledge and strengthening awareness about the dangers of drug abuse. The primary objective is to develop mental and psychological resilience among potential victims, thereby reducing their vulnerability to persuasion or manipulation by drug dealers. This approach helps protect street children from recruitment efforts by traffickers. However, the author's analysis reveals that this initiative remains limited to the cognitive dimension and has yet to address the structural roots of vulnerability, such as poverty and family disintegration. Moreover, it is necessary to adapt the delivery methods to align more effectively with the characteristics of street children, who typically possess low levels of education and a practical orientation toward daily survival.

In addition, the Karawang Regency National Narcotics Agency conducts recovery programs based on Article 54 of Law Number 35 of 2009 on Narcotics, which stipulates that drug-abusing children are not subject to criminal

sanctions but are instead required to undergo medical and social rehabilitation. The implementation of this program is carried out in collaboration with Partner Recovery Institutions under the coordination of the Provincial and Central National Narcotics Agency. According to the Regulation of the Head of National Narcotics Agency Number 6 of 2020 concerning the Organization and Work Procedures of National Narcotics Agency at the Provincial and Regency/City Levels, district-level National Narcotics Agency offices primarily focus on community prevention, empowerment, early detection, and preliminary interventions such as examinations and assessments, while inpatient rehabilitation falls under the jurisdiction of the Provincial and Central National Narcotics Agency or designated rehabilitation centers. The author's analysis indicates that this division of authority can create service gaps, as the limited mandate of district-level National Narcotics Agency offices in inpatient recovery may lead to delays in treatment and the loss of critical recovery momentum. Therefore, institutional capacity and authority at the district level should be strengthened to ensure more immediate and effective rehabilitation services.

Furthermore, the agency promotes the formation of Anti-Drug Volunteer groups as part of a community-based prevention initiative. This program engages social activists and community members who have direct interactions with street children to reduce their exposure to drugs. Interviews reveal that most street children are positioned as victims rather than perpetrators, as drug dealers exploit them for business purposes.³⁹ Drug use among these children generally stems from a desire to cope with hardship and achieve temporary relief or pleasure rather than deliberate criminal intent, and their awareness of health and self-care remains limited.⁴⁰ Consequently, the Karawang Regency National Narcotics Agency continues to expand preventive efforts by collaborating with the National Unity and Politics Agency (*Kesatuan Bangsa dan Politik/Kesbangpol*) to designate all Village Heads in Karawang Regency as task force officers responsible for monitoring youth activities in their respective areas. Through this partnership, the agency aims to prevent young people from becoming street children and to reduce their involvement in drug abuse.⁴¹

The author's analysis shows that this community-based approach is highly strategic because it leverages existing social capital at the village level.

³⁹ Hannah Marshall, Matthew Bacon, and Jack Spicer, "Emerging Victims in Contemporary Drugs Policing," *The British Journal of Criminology* 64, no. 6 (2024): 1302.

⁴⁰ Yulia Utami and Muhamad Hasan Sebyar, "Analisis Pemidanaan Terhadap Anak Sebagai Pengedar Narkotika dalam Perspektif Psikologi Kriminal," *Journal of Law and Nation* 2, no. 4 (2023): 389.

⁴¹ Mohammad Khoirul Anam, S.Sos.,I. (2025, Agustus , Pukul 10.00 WIB). Wawancara bersama Mohammad Khoirul Anam, S.Sos.,I. selaku Ketua Bidang P2M Badan Narkotika Nasional Kabupaten Karawang [Personal communication]

The involvement of village heads as task forces creates a monitoring system that is more closely connected to the community. However, the success of this program depends heavily on the capacity and commitment of village heads, as well as adequate budgetary support for operational activities. The Karawang Police Narcotics Investigation Unit, as the spearhead of narcotics law enforcement, focuses not only on decisive action through prosecution and arrests, but also prioritizes preventive and early-stage interventions. This aligns with the criminal justice policy approach, which emphasizes a balance between prevention and enforcement. Preventive and early-stage interventions are aimed at reducing the opportunities for street children to become involved in drug abuse.

The Karawang Police Narcotics Investigation Unit implements a series of strategic activities that encompass three interrelated areas designed to prevent drug abuse among street children. To begin with, the unit places strong emphasis on information dissemination and education concerning the dangers of narcotics. Through counseling and public information programs conducted in vulnerable areas such as red-light intersections and informal gathering points, the unit seeks to raise awareness about the health risks and legal consequences of drug abuse. While information dissemination is primarily informative, counseling is interactive in nature, allowing for reciprocal communication through discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and motivational guidance aimed at empowering street children to resist narcotic influences.

Furthermore, the unit adopts dialogue patrols and a humane approach as an integral part of its community engagement efforts. Rather than limiting their presence to law enforcement activities, officers actively interact with street children in areas they frequently occupy, offering mentorship and emotional support. This initiative reflects the principles of community policing, which emphasize the importance of building trust and fostering cooperation between law enforcement and the community. By positioning police officers as both protectors and mentors, this approach helps bridge the gap between authority figures and marginalized youth, thereby strengthening preventive efforts and reducing fear or stigma toward law enforcement.

In addition, the Karawang Police Narcotics Investigation Unit collaborates closely with the National Narcotics Agency at the regency and city levels, the Social Services Agency, and various community stakeholders to provide ongoing guidance and mentoring. These activities include vocational training, informal education, and counseling sessions designed to equip street children with life skills and alternative opportunities. This initiative is consistent with the Lifestyle Exposure Theory, which suggests that reducing interaction with high-risk environments lowers the likelihood of involvement in drug-

related activities. The author's analysis indicates that the integrated strategy of combining preventive and enforcement measures demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of street children's vulnerability. Moreover, the application of community policing principles contributes to trust-building and the reduction of negative social stigma toward officers. Nevertheless, the long-term sustainability of this initiative requires continuous budgetary support and specialized training for officers to ensure effective communication and intervention tailored to the unique needs of street children.

The Karawang Police Narcotics Unit's focus goes beyond prevention; it also includes countermeasures implemented while the Narcotics Unit is carrying out its duties, specifically addressing drug abuse, particularly among street children in Karawang Regency. Based on interviews with investigators from the Karawang Police Narcotics Investigation Unit, the Narcotics Unit's working mechanism for detecting street children involved in drug abuse involves reporting information from the public or informants. Once the information is validated, an observation is conducted to further identify an abuser. Once the information is confirmed, an arrest is made. Arrests must be made when caught red-handed and the perpetrator is holding evidence. Further steps were taken to the Narcotics Investigation Unit office to be submitted to the investigation team regarding the data collection of detected evidence and whether the elements had been fulfilled.⁴²

The author's analysis of the overall prevention and response strategy reveals several important points. There exists a strong coordination between the Karawang Regency National Narcotics Agency and the Karawang Police Narcotics Unit in implementing their respective mandates. This collaboration reflects a well-structured institutional relationship that enables both agencies to complement one another in addressing the issue of drug abuse among street children. Moreover, the approach adopted by these institutions strives to achieve a balance between prevention and enforcement, aligning with the principles of restorative justice that emphasize recovery, rehabilitation, and social reintegration rather than punitive measures. In addition, the active participation of the community through volunteer programs and village-level task forces demonstrates an acknowledgment that the problem of narcotics cannot be resolved solely through law enforcement efforts but requires collective social responsibility.

Nevertheless, several weaknesses in implementation remain evident. There continues to be a significant gap between preventive initiatives and

⁴² Lonnie Embleton, Lukoye Atwoli, David Ayuku, and Paula Braitstein, "The Journey of Addiction: Barriers to and Facilitators of Drug Use Cessation among Street Children and Youths in Western Kenya," *PLoS One* 8, no. 1 (2013): 53435.

efforts to address the structural roots of the problem, particularly poverty and the breakdown of family systems. Furthermore, the limited authority of the Regency-level National Narcotics Agency in administering inpatient rehabilitation reduces the overall effectiveness of recovery services and may hinder timely interventions. Equally important, the sustainability of these programs remains vulnerable to fluctuations in political commitment and budgetary allocation, both of which are uncertain in the long term.

To enhance program effectiveness, it is therefore essential to integrate drug prevention and rehabilitation initiatives with broader economic and social development policies, ensuring that interventions address both immediate and structural causes of vulnerability. Additionally, strengthening institutional capacity at the district level is crucial to enable faster and more effective responses. Finally, the development of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework is necessary to systematically assess program performance and measure its impact on reducing the susceptibility of street children to drug abuse.

D. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm that drug abuse among street children in Karawang Regency is not solely a legal or criminal matter but a complex social and public health issue rooted in structural vulnerabilities. Based on the Lifestyle-Exposure Theory, the study demonstrates that street children's high exposure to risky environments, unstable housing, peer influence, and lack of family supervision significantly increases their likelihood of becoming victims of drug abuse. The fact that 80% of street children are familiar with narcotics either through direct experience or environmental exposure underscores the depth of this crisis and the urgent need for an integrated policy response.

The empirical evidence gathered from the Karawang Police Narcotics Investigation Unit between 2021 and August 2025, which shows a consistent rise in drug abuse cases from 47 to 70, further supports the argument that preventive and rehabilitative efforts remain insufficient. The proliferation of social media has created new digital channels for narcotics distribution, allowing dealers to exploit street children through deceptive online relationships. This highlights the adaptive nature of drug trafficking networks and the inadequacy of current prevention systems in addressing technological and psychological manipulation.

Institutional initiatives, including the PEPSIGN (Prevention, Eradication, and Eradication of Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking) program by the Karawang National Narcotics Agency and the community policing strategies by the Karawang Police Narcotics Unit, have demonstrated promising preventive and rehabilitative efforts. However, these programs still face limitations related to

inter-agency coordination, insufficient budget allocation, and the lack of specialized personnel trained to handle child-specific vulnerabilities. The persistent increase in drug-related cases reflects that current interventions have not yet bridged the gap between prevention, social protection, and rehabilitation.

Therefore, to effectively address the issue, it is essential to reconceptualize drug policy in Karawang Regency through a multi-sectoral approach that integrates legal enforcement, public health, education, and social welfare. Strengthening institutional capacity, expanding early intervention systems, and embedding rehabilitation programs within community-based initiatives are critical steps. Moreover, consistent political commitment and long-term budgetary support are necessary to sustain these programs. Ultimately, protecting street children from drug abuse requires not only law enforcement but also social empowerment, family-based interventions, and structural reforms that address poverty and exclusion the root causes that perpetuate their vulnerability.

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