
The Urgency of Legal Protection for Children Involved in Drug Trafficking in Indonesia

Mursyid^{1*}, Muhammad Rishad Ilmi², & Muhammad Azham Ilham³

^{1, 2, 3}Fakultas Hukum, Universitas Muslim Indonesia

*Email Corresponding: mursyid.mursyid@umi.ac.id

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Abstract

This research aims to find out and analyze legal protection for children as child drug courier and to find out and analyze the factors that influence legal protection for children as child drug couriers. This research uses empirical research methods. The results of this research show that legal protection for children as child drug courier is very important, this aims to overcome the problem of criminal act and protect their future, including ensuring that they continue to have access to adequate education, and is focused on rehabilitation and social reintegration, not only punishment and the factors that influence legal protection for children as child drug courier are age, environment, education and socio-economic conditions. In addition, children who grow up in an unstable environment and are exposed to violence or criminal activities have a higher risk of falling into drug syndicates. The recommendation of this research is that it is hoped that the government will ensure that children involved as child drug courier have access to drug syndicates. proper education and comprehensive rehabilitation programs to help them get out of the cycle of criminal act and build a better future and it is hoped that security forces will process cases of child drug courier quickly and responsibly, as well as apply an age-sensitive approach and children's special needs to ensure their rights are protected during the legal process.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the drug threat in Indonesia is very serious and concerning, considering the number of users, the proportion of abusers, and the types and quantities of drugs being misused and distributed illegally within the community. The distribution and abuse of narcotics is a national problem that the government views seriously, as it is believed to cause moral decay in the nation (Sasangka, 2003).

The problem of drug abuse and distribution continues to be a global and crucial issue, even endemic to nearly all levels of society. A survey by the National Narcotics Agency (BNN) noted that drug abuse and distribution have reached the household level, with the highest prevalence among young people, such as children and adolescents. Today, virtually no place is free from drugs, and users and dealers are prevalent across almost all generations.

According to a 2020 report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Criminal act (UNODC), children and adolescents are vulnerable targets for drug smuggling and trafficking worldwide. They are often employed as couriers to transport drugs from one location to another. They are often promised money or goods in exchange for their work. However, like children, they are often unaware that their actions violate the law and can negatively impact their health and future (“United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime,” 2020).

Many children fall into this practice due to various factors, such as difficult family economic conditions, poor environments, social pressure, a lack of understanding of the dangers of drugs, and a lack of education and job opportunities. In some cases, child couriers are even forced into the drug trade by their own parents.

Narcotics have become a means of livelihood to obtain money or material goods easily, neglecting legitimate productive efforts. This social problem, besides violating legal provisions, cultural customs, and religious provisions, is also a violation of this phenomenon. In Islam, narcotics are included in the type of intoxicating *khamr*, and anything that intoxicates, whether in large or small amounts, is declared haram. As stated by the Islamic jurisprudence scholar Sheikh Sayyid Sabiq, the law prohibiting narcotics is likened to *khamr* because narcotics are substances that intoxicate or make someone unconscious.

Undeniably, Indonesia is a major market for international and national (Wijaya., 2016) drug dealers. Even Makassar, the capital of South Sulawesi province, is not immune to the threat of narcotics. Many Makassar residents have used, abused, and become members of drug trafficking syndicates. Makassar currently ranks 13th in narcotics trafficking cases out of 33 provinces in Indonesia (BNN, 2023).

The circulation of narcotics has reached an alarming level, with the distribution of these illicit substances not only affecting adults but also children. Drug trafficking is not only dominated by adults, but also by children and adolescents. In Makassar City itself, since 2018, the number of children involved in narcotics has continued to increase annually.

Children are vulnerable to being used as child drug courier because they can easily be manipulated by irresponsible adults. Therefore, adequate legal protection is crucial to protect children from drug abuse. Children must receive adequate protection and care, as well as opportunities for self-improvement through rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

This, of course, aims to protect children's rights so that their mental and psychological well-being can continue to grow and develop for their future (Pradityo, 2017). Because children are a valuable human resource and the nation's future generation, they deserve special attention from the government in developing them to create resilient and high-quality human resources.

In Indonesia, special protection is provided to children involved in drug abuse. As stipulated in Law No. 35 of 2014 concerning Amendments to Law No. 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection, Article 67 states that special protection for children who are victims of the abuse of narcotics, alcohol, psychotropic drugs, and other addictive substances, and children involved in their production and distribution, is carried out through supervision, prevention, and rehabilitation efforts (*Undang-Undang Nomor 35 Tahun 2014 Tentang Perubahan atas Undang-Undang Nomor 23 Tahun 2002 Tentang Perlindungan anak*, n.d.).

However, despite legal protections for children as child drug couriers, various challenges remain in providing effective protection. These include a lack of public awareness of the dangers of narcotics and the need to protect children from drug abuse, as well as the inability of law enforcement officials to provide adequate protection and rehabilitation for children involved in drug criminal act.

Therefore, referring to the above description, the author is interested in discussing and researching the issue of drug abuse in a paper entitled "Legal Protection for Children as Child drug courier (Case Study at the Makassar Police Headquarters)." The research question is:

What is the legal protection for children as child drug couriers? And what factors influence legal protection for children as child drug couriers?

METHODOLOGY

Judging from the focus of the study, the legal research conducted is included in the empirical research type. Empirical Legal Research is legal research that seeks to observe law in a concrete sense, or can be said to observe and examine how law works in society (Butarbutar, 2018). The approaches used to answer the problem formulation in legal research utilize several approaches. These approaches include the statutory approach, the conceptual approach (Syamsudin, 2007), and the historical approach. The objects of research using a normative doctrinal approach are data in the form of primary legal materials, secondary legal materials, and tertiary legal materials. This research is conducted through library research, a literature study or normative research that only involves reading or analyzing written materials. The legal material collection techniques used in this research are interviews and library research, namely the technique of collecting legal material by searching, recording, inventorying, and studying books, literature, laws and regulations, previous research results, and documentation related to the problem being studied (Abdul Kadir, 2004).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Legal Protection for Children of Child Drug Courier

Legal protection for children as child drug courier an urgent issue that needs to be addressed in Indonesia. In this country, children are often victims of exploitation by drug syndicates who exploit their vulnerability. Furthermore, drug abuse in Indonesia (Bima., 2021) continues to increase year after year, with narcotics contributing to 15,000 deaths per year. Therefore, serious attention and concrete steps are needed from various parties to protect children from the threat of drug trafficking and provide them with adequate protection in accordance with their rights as vulnerable individuals entitled to protection.

Legal protection for child child drug courieris not only crucial for addressing criminal act but also for safeguarding the future of Indonesia's younger generation. Children involved in the drug trade often face serious risks to their health and safety (Eastman, A. L., Park, K., Herz, D., 2025), as well as long-term impacts on their psychological and social development. Therefore, Law Number 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics(*Undang-Undang Nomor 35 Tahun 2009 tentang Narkotika*, n.d.), which regulates drug handling, including protection and rehabilitation for victims of drug abuse, such as child child drug couriers, is crucial in protecting them from the negative impacts of drug abuse.

When a child involved in drug trafficking is placed in a protective custody from a childcare facility, it is crucial to ensure their right to education is safeguarded. Education is a fundamental right for every child, even those involved in unlawful behavior. Continuing education is key to providing children with opportunities to improve their future, develop their skills, and prevent them from falling deeper into the cycle of criminal act. Therefore, child protection agencies must collaborate with relevant parties, such as schools and local education authorities, to ensure that drug trafficking children continue to have the same access to

education as other children (Hidayat, Asep Syarifuddin, Samul Anam, 2018). Furthermore, within the context of legal protection for children, ensuring that drug trafficking

Education not only provides academic knowledge but also helps in character building, raises awareness of the consequences of inappropriate behavior, and provides positive alternatives for a better future. By facilitating education for child drug couriers, child protection agencies can help them change their life paths, avoid further involvement in illegal activities, and build a strong foundation for their reintegration into society after their rehabilitation period in the protection agency. Thus, continuing education is an integral part of legal protection efforts for child drug couriers, which aims not only to safeguard their rights but also to provide a real opportunity for recovery and positive change in their lives.

Based on the author's interview with Brigadier Fathur Rahmat, he stated that it is crucial for the police to process cases quickly and responsibly in the investigation process involving children as child drug couriers. A swift and responsible process not only ensures justice for all parties involved but also reduces the risk of human rights violations and provides legal certainty to the public. In the context of cases involving children as child drug couriers, efficient and professional police involvement is crucial to protecting children's rights, including the right to fair treatment, the right to adequate legal representation, and the right to undergo legal proceedings without discrimination. Furthermore, by processing cases quickly, the police can prevent the further spread of drug networks and the potential social damage they cause (Rahmat, 2025).

By efficiently investigating and following up on cases, the police can also send a strong signal to perpetrators that their actions will not be tolerated by the law. Responsible investigations also include respecting the rights of the individuals involved and maintaining public trust in the police and the judicial system. Thus, through prompt and responsible case processing, the police can play an active role in enforcing the law and providing effective protection to child drug couriers and the community at large. (Baidawi, S., Newton, D., Mendes, P., Bollinger, J., & Purtell, 2024)

Environmental, educational, and economic factors play a crucial role in determining a child's likelihood of becoming a child drug courier. The environment in which a child is raised can influence behavioral patterns and accepted social norms. Exposure to violence, drug use, and other criminal activities can increase a child's risk of engaging in illegal activities such as child drug couriers. Furthermore, low levels of education can leave children vulnerable to deception and manipulation, as well as a lack of awareness of the negative consequences of drug trafficking.

Economically, children from low-income backgrounds often seek opportunities to increase their income, and when exposed to environments that lack access to education and equitable economic opportunities, they may be vulnerable to the temptation to become child drug couriers as a shortcut to earning money. Education also plays a crucial role in equipping children with the skills and knowledge they need to make sound decisions in their lives. Children who have access to a quality education are more likely to identify and resist pressures from adverse environments. Furthermore, education can provide a better understanding of the risks and consequences of engaging in drug trafficking, opening the door to better future opportunities. Therefore, efforts to increase access to quality education, improve healthy

environmental conditions, and create equitable economic opportunities can help reduce the risk of children becoming child drug couriers and provide a stronger foundation for a brighter future.

Bripda Fathur Rachmat also added that law enforcement in accordance with the law and involving *lex specialis* is crucial for child protection, including in cases involving children as child drug couriers (Rahmat, 2025). *Lex specialis* is a legal principle that asserts that laws specifically regulating an issue will have priority over general laws in the context of the same case. In this regard, *lex specialis* provides a more focused and precise framework for handling cases involving children as perpetrators or victims. This allows the legal system to pay more attention to the special needs and rights of children in the judicial context, such as age-sensitive treatment, adequate legal assistance, and rehabilitation efforts that are more oriented towards recovery and social reintegration (Arifin, 2021). Furthermore, law enforcement in accordance with the law and *lex specialis* also helps prevent abuse of power or discrimination against children in the legal process.

Article 55 of Law Number 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics (*Undang-Undang Nomor 35 Tahun 2009 tentang Narkotika*, n.d.), which regulates the protection and rehabilitation of victims of narcotics abuse, including children of child drug couriers, enables the legal system to provide more effective and sensitive protection to the needs of children. Article 55 paragraph (1) of Law Number 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics (*Undang-Undang Nomor 35 Tahun 2009 tentang Narkotika*, n.d.) also emphasizes that victims of narcotics abuse, including children of child drug couriers, have the right to receive protection and rehabilitation that is appropriate to their needs and rights.

By implementing child protection principles enshrined in *lex specialis*, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, states guarantee that children will not be subjected to harmful or inadequate treatment or punishment, and provide necessary protection against exploitation and abuse. Therefore, involving *lex specialis* in law enforcement is not only about ensuring compliance with the law, but also about ensuring effective and fair protection for children involved in the justice system. Therefore, law enforcement in accordance with the law and *lex specialis* is a crucial step in efforts to safeguard justice, human rights, and the well-being of child child drug courier and other cases.

Significant impacts of children involved as child drug couriers include dropping out of school and serious psychological consequences. Dropping out of school is a common consequence because child drug couriers' children often engage in time-consuming activities that disrupt the regularity of school life. They may be involved in delivering or picking up illicit goods during school hours, resulting in absenteeism or even permanent suspension from school. This leads to stunted academic progress and potentially reduces their future opportunities for success. Furthermore, the psychological impact of being a child drug courier is also very serious.

Children in these situations may experience stress, anxiety, and trauma due to pressure from their employers, the risk of arrest by authorities, or concerns for their safety and that of their families. When children are placed directly in daycare, the police may miss the opportunity to understand these psychological impacts. These psychological impacts can impact the child's mental and emotional well-being long-term, even after they are released from detention or have completed the legal process. Therefore, it is crucial for those involved in

handling cases of child drug couriers, including the police, to pay attention to and understand the psychological impacts these children may experience so they can provide appropriate support and assistance in their recovery and reintegration.

Article 1 paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code stipulates that an act cannot be punished unless it is based on the strength of existing criminal law provisions. In the context of handling children as child drug couriers, this principle emphasizes that all legal action against children must be based on existing legal provisions. Law enforcement against children as perpetrators of criminal act must pay attention to principles that recognize their special needs, including a more sensitive, rehabilitative approach and intensive guidance, as stipulated in applicable laws. Therefore, in the investigation process, investigators must consider the needs of children and ensure that every step taken is based on an appropriate legal basis.

Children may also require a more cautious approach during questioning and interviews to avoid harming their emotional well-being. Therefore, investigations involving children as child drug courier may require longer periods of time to ensure their rights are respected and the legal process is fair and proportionate. In this regard, police and law enforcement officials must be highly aware of these differences and prepared to address the unique challenges that may arise in investigating children (Susila, M. E. & Yonar, 2024).

Children who act as child drug courier are often influenced by impressionable environments, where factors such as their peers, family, and social environment play a significant role in shaping their behavior and decisions. A less stable environment, exposure to violence, drug use, or other criminal activity can be significant risk factors for children becoming involved in drug trafficking. Furthermore, the lure of money is often a major draw for children living in low-income neighborhoods, where they may view drug trafficking as a quick way to make money without considering the long-term consequences.

The drive to improve their economic situation or to pursue a more glamorous lifestyle can be a major motivating factor in their decision to become involved in the drug trade, even without adequate understanding of the risks and consequences. Furthermore, child drug couriers are often trapped in environments where they are influenced by adults involved in the drug trade. These figures may exploit children's immaturity and vulnerability to manipulate them into becoming part of drug networks. By exploiting the relationships they have established with children, such as those of authority figures or protectors, these adults can coerce or influence children into taking on roles as child drug couriers. In some cases, children may feel emotionally or financially tied to these adults, making it difficult for them to refuse or exit these dangerous situations. Therefore, this impressionable environment presents additional challenges in preventing and protecting children from becoming involved in the drug trade.

The role of society, religion, and institutions is crucial in drug prevention and management efforts because they have great potential to create a supportive environment for individuals, families, and communities in overcoming the challenges associated with drug abuse. Society as a whole can provide moral, social, and economic support to individuals struggling with drug problems, as well as promote awareness of the dangers of drugs and the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The role of religion is also significant because it is often a source of moral and ethical values that can inspire individuals to stay away from destructive

behaviors such as drug abuse. Churches, mosques, or other places of worship can also provide support, counseling, and rehabilitation for individuals affected by drugs or their families. Furthermore, institutions such as educational institutions, government, and non-governmental organizations play a crucial role in drug prevention and management.

Educational institutions have the opportunity to provide a better understanding of the dangers of drugs to young people and to shape positive attitudes and behaviors through educational and outreach programs. The government can implement effective policies and programs to combat drug trafficking, strengthen law enforcement, and provide rehabilitation services for those affected. Meanwhile, non-governmental organizations are often powerful agents of change in society by providing social services, counseling, support, and advocacy for individuals and families affected by drugs. With close collaboration between communities, religions, and institutions, drug prevention and response efforts can be more effective and sustainable.

The application of *lex specialis* in handling cases involving children as child drug couriers is crucial because it provides a specific and appropriate legal framework to protect the special rights and interests of children in the judicial context. *Lex specialis*, or laws specifically addressing a particular issue, provides clear guidance on how children should be handled in the justice system, including in cases involving drug abuse. This allows law enforcement to treat children fairly and age-sensitively, taking into account their specific needs for protection, rehabilitation, and social reintegration. Furthermore, the application of *lex specialis* also helps ensure that the handling of cases involving children as child drug couriers is not solely oriented toward punishment, but also toward rehabilitation efforts and positive behavioral change.

With a focus on rehabilitation and reintegration, *lex specialis* can provide a legal basis that allows authorities to direct children to rehabilitation programs tailored to their needs, including mental health services, education, and skills training. Thus, applying *lex specialis* to cases involving child drug couriers helps ensure that the justice system aims not only to enforce the law but also to protect and improve the future of children involved in such cases.

Although no specific constraints are mentioned, it is crucial to adhere to the law when handling cases involving child drug couriers. Compliance with the law is a fundamental principle of a fair and just justice system. It creates a strong foundation for ensuring that individual rights are respected and that everyone, including children involved in illegal activities, is treated according to applicable legal standards. By acting in accordance with the law, authorities can avoid human rights violations, discrimination, or abuse of power that may occur during the law enforcement process. Furthermore, acting in accordance with the law also helps maintain public trust in the judiciary and the police.

When the public sees that actions taken by authorities comply with fair and transparent legal standards, this strengthens the legitimacy and authority of law enforcement agencies. It also creates a sense of justice and legal certainty for all parties involved in the judicial process, including victims, perpetrators, and society as a whole. By maintaining the integrity and credibility of the justice system through compliance with the law, we can ensure that drug eradication efforts are carried out effectively and fairly, meeting high standards of ethics and fairness (Anwar, 2019).

According to the author, the form of legal protection for children who become drug couriers in Indonesia still emphasizes normative aspects rather than a holistic rehabilitative approach. The author argues that law enforcement officials should take the principle of best interest of the child more seriously, not only at the policy level but also in the technical implementation in the field, including during the investigation and trial process.

B. Factors Influencing Legal Protection for Children as Child Drug Couriers

Based on interviews conducted by the author at the Makassar Police Headquarters with Brigadier Fathur Rachmat, factors influencing legal protection for children as child drug couriers include (Rahmat, 2025):

1. Age 18 and under

The greater legal protection afforded to children compared to adults reflects an understanding of the vulnerabilities and special needs of children within the legal system. Children are considered a more vulnerable group due to their physical, mental, and emotional limitations, as well as their lack of experience and understanding of the consequences of their actions. Therefore, greater legal protection is necessary to ensure that their rights are protected and that they are not exploited or exploited in the legal process. This includes rights such as the right to education, safety, health, and fair treatment in the legal process. Furthermore, this special protection is rooted in the principle that children are an investment in the future of society and the nation.

By providing adequate and comprehensive protection to children, society hopes to create a safe and supportive environment for the growth and development of future generations. This is also in line with the commitment to protecting human rights and promoting children's welfare as a top priority in social and legal development. Therefore, greater legal protection for children is not only a moral obligation but also a strategic investment in creating a better and more sustainable future for society as a whole.

The author argues that age is a key indicator that should be actively considered at every stage of the legal process concerning children. The legal protection afforded to children should not merely be a formality, but should be realized through an empathetic approach that is appropriate to the stages of the child's psychological development.

2. Laws and Policies

The availability of laws and policies governing child protection and punishment for drug offenders is an essential foundation for safeguarding children's welfare and combating drug trafficking. These laws regulate various aspects of protection, including children's rights, handling drug cases involving children, and prevention and rehabilitation. Effective policies are implemented to ensure that children's rights are adequately protected, while drug offenders are subject to sanctions commensurate with their criminal act.

Sentences for drug offenders must be balanced and fair, taking into account various factors, including the severity of the criminal act, the offender's age, and their social circumstances. Legal sanctions must align with prevention and rehabilitation goals, providing opportunities for offenders to improve themselves and return to society as productive individuals. Furthermore, child protection in the context of drug abuse also involves a holistic

prevention approach, including effective education about the dangers of drugs, social support for vulnerable children, and efforts to break the chain of drug trafficking early on. Thus, a combination of strong laws, effective policies, and fair law enforcement is key to safeguarding children and addressing the drug problem in society.

According to the author, the existing regulations are adequate in providing a legal basis for the protection of children, but their implementation is not evenly distributed across the legal jurisdictions in Indonesia. This necessitates ongoing training and legal socialization for law enforcement officials at the local level.

3. Legal System and Justice

The effectiveness of the judicial system in handling drug cases involving children is key to ensuring justice and protection for them. An effective investigation process must take into account the special needs of children, such as appropriate legal representation and the use of interview techniques sensitive to their circumstances. Furthermore, prosecutions must be based on strong evidence and consider sanctions appropriate to the child's age and level of involvement in the drug case.

In this regard, the role of child protection agencies and counselors is also crucial in providing support and guidance to children throughout the legal process. Court decisions must be fair and prioritize the child's best interests. This involves a careful assessment of the child's situation, including environmental and social factors influencing their behavior. Courts must also consider rehabilitation as an alternative to criminal punishment (Karina, 2024), providing opportunities for children to improve themselves and avoid further involvement in drug activities. Thus, an effective justice system in handling narcotics cases involving children must be based on the principles of justice, equality, and protection of human rights, while still paying attention to the special needs and best interests of children (Rachmawati, 2021).

The author assesses that a fair legal system for children has not yet been fully realized. Strengthening child protection institutions in the litigation process needs to be encouraged so that the roles of legal and psychological assistants become mandatory, not just an option.

4. Counseling and Education

Efforts to educate and educate children about the dangers of drugs and the legal consequences of involvement in the drug trade are a crucial prevention strategy in addressing the drug problem in society. This counseling not only aims to increase children's understanding of the dangers of drugs on their physical and mental health, but also to provide knowledge about the social, economic, and legal impacts of drug trafficking.

By providing clear and accurate information, children can better understand the serious consequences they may face if they engage in drug activities, including life-altering legal action. Furthermore, drug education should also include developing skills for dealing with peer pressure and making positive decisions. This includes developing interpersonal skills, managing emotions, and increasing self-confidence to resist the temptation of drugs and choose a healthy lifestyle. Thus, these counseling and education efforts not only provide knowledge about the dangers of drugs but also empower children to take control of their own decisions and protect themselves from negative influences around them. With a holistic and integrated

approach, counseling and education can be an effective tool in preventing children from getting involved in drug trafficking and promoting a healthy and responsible lifestyle.

The writer believes that counseling and education about the dangers of narcotics should be amplified through collaboration between schools, local governments, and law enforcement agencies. Preventive programs will be much more effective if implemented comprehensively and systematically.

5. Social Environment

Environmental factors, including family, school, and community, have a significant impact on children's exposure to drugs and the effectiveness of the protection efforts available to them. The family is the first environment where children are exposed to values, behaviors, and communication patterns related to drugs. Families that have open communication patterns and a strong understanding of the dangers of drugs can help protect children from the risk of abuse. Conversely, families that engage in drug abuse or have unhealthy family dynamics can increase a child's risk of drug exposure. In addition to the family, the school environment also plays a crucial role in protecting children from the negative influences of drugs.

Schools not only provide education about the dangers of drugs but also create a safe and supportive environment for students. School programs that include drug education, rewarding extracurricular activities, and social skills development can help reduce children's exposure to drugs. Furthermore, the community plays a role in providing support and resources for children to avoid drug abuse. Communities with safe recreational facilities, targeted youth programs, and strong social support tend to provide better protection for children from the risks of drugs. Thus, collaboration between families, schools, and communities is essential to create an environment that supports the growth and development of children free from drugs.

The author emphasizes that a conducive social environment is an important factor in reducing the involvement of children in drug circulation. Strengthening family and community resilience efforts must be a priority in national policy.

6. Economic Factors

Economic factors, such as poverty and economic instability, significantly impact children's vulnerability to the easy money offered by the drug trade. Children living in less prosperous economic environments tend to face greater economic pressures, both directly and indirectly. In difficult financial times, children may be tempted to seek additional sources of income, especially if they lack adequate access to education or decent employment opportunities. Drug traffickers often exploit these difficult economic times by offering children easy money or lucrative financial rewards in exchange for their role in the drug trade. Furthermore, economic instability can create uncertainty in children's daily lives, which can increase their risk of becoming involved in the drug trade.

Children growing up in environments where basic needs, such as food, shelter, or education, are not consistently met may seek unconventional ways to meet their needs or improve their family's financial situation. In difficult economic times, the offer of easy money from the drug trade can seem like an attractive solution to financial hardship. Therefore, it is important to recognize the important role of economic factors in increasing children's

vulnerability to drug offers and take steps to improve family economic stability and provide more positive alternatives for children in dealing with financial pressures.

According to the author, poverty is a structural factor that drives children to become drug couriers. Therefore, legal protection strategies must also include economic interventions such as social security programs and educational scholarships for children from vulnerable families.

7. Psychological Factors

Psychological factors play a significant role in determining children's vulnerability to negative influences and criminal activity, including drug trafficking. Children experiencing psychological or emotional problems, such as depression, anxiety, or trauma, may seek an escape from their pain or discomfort. Drug abuse is often perceived as a quick way to cope with or forget these problems, although it provides only temporary relief and can potentially worsen their condition. Furthermore, children who feel isolated or unaccepted in their social environment may be more susceptible to the influence of groups involved in criminal activity, including drug trafficking, as a means of seeking a sense of identity or belonging.

Furthermore, unstable or unhealthy environmental influences can also affect children's psychological well-being. For example, domestic violence, family conflict, or housing instability can cause chronic stress in children and increase their risk of engaging in harmful behaviors, including drug use. Furthermore, pressure from peers or those around them who engage in drug abuse can also influence children's decisions to engage in such activities. Therefore, it is important to provide appropriate psychological support to children experiencing emotional or psychological problems, as well as to create a stable and supportive environment for their growth and development (Irianto, 2022).

The author assesses that the legal approach to child offenders of drug crimes must be sensitive to psychological aspects. A trauma-informed care approach can help identify the background of the child's actions and provide more appropriate interventions.

8. Drug Networks

The presence of strong and organized drug networks plays a significant role in increasing the risk of children becoming involved as child drug couriers. These networks often possess extensive resources, connections, and strategies for recruiting young individuals into the drug trade. Children are often easy targets for these networks due to their greater vulnerability to outside influences and pressing financial needs. Drug networks also tend to offer substantial financial rewards to children who act as couriers, which can be very tempting for those living in poverty or economic instability. Furthermore, drug networks often use psychological manipulation tactics, such as deception or threats, to coerce children into participating in drug trafficking activities. Furthermore, the presence of strong drug networks also expands the reach of drug trafficking into various regions, including areas that may have previously been relatively safe from drug problems. This makes children living in these environments more vulnerable to the influence and offers of drug networks. Moreover, drug networks often have the resources to expand their operations into schools and communities, which can increase the risk of children being exposed to drug trafficking or being recruited as

couriers. Therefore, tackling the drug problem requires not only efforts to protect children individually but also a focus on disrupting drug networks and their operations to reduce the risk of children being involved in the drug trade.

The author argues that the state should target drug trafficking syndicates that exploit children as primary targets in law enforcement policies. Children are victims of exploitation, and enforcement should be more focused on the masterminds behind the trafficking.

9. Law Enforcement

Effective law enforcement plays a crucial role in preventing and addressing drug trafficking, including protecting children from involvement in such activities. Effective law enforcement requires collaboration between various law enforcement agencies, such as the police, prosecutors, and other relevant institutions, as well as cooperation with relevant parties in the community. Law enforcement efforts must be proactive, focusing on preventing and dismantling drug trafficking networks before they lead more children to become couriers or engage in other drug activities. Furthermore, law enforcement must incorporate a rehabilitative approach for child drug courier, providing them with access to mental health services, education, and skills training so they can reintegrate into society as productive members. Furthermore, it is crucial to strengthen international cooperation in law enforcement to address drug trafficking involving children (Coşkun, U. H. & Sarıca, 2025).

Children's involvement in drug trafficking often crosses national borders, making cross-border cooperation crucial to effectively combat drug trafficking networks. This involves exchanging information, evidence, and coordinating law enforcement actions between countries to prosecute perpetrators, disrupt drug trafficking routes, and reduce the involvement of children in these activities. Furthermore, law enforcement efforts must be supported by strong and clear policies and adequate resource allocation to ensure effective and sustainable law enforcement in protecting children from the negative impacts of drug trafficking. The author views that law enforcement officials need to be given a deeper understanding of the principle of *lex specialis derogat legi generali* in the context of children, so that the legal process can proceed in accordance with the principles of restorative justice and rehabilitation.

10. Public Awareness

Public awareness of the importance of child protection and the handling of drug cases involving children has a significant impact on legal protection efforts. A high level of awareness can encourage the public to be more proactive in supporting measures to prevent, detect, and address drug cases involving children. With increased awareness, the public can be more alert to potential signs of children's involvement in drug trafficking and more active in reporting suspicious activity to the authorities. Furthermore, public awareness can also strengthen support for drug prevention programs in schools and communities and provide moral support to children involved in drug cases to receive the protection and rehabilitation they need. However, low public awareness of the importance of child protection and the handling of drug cases can be a serious obstacle to legal protection efforts.

Ignorance or lack of understanding about the dangers of drugs and their consequences for children can result in a lack of response to signs of children's involvement in the drug trade,

as well as a lack of support for prevention and rehabilitation programs. Therefore, education and public awareness campaigns about drug issues and the importance of protecting children from these dangers are crucial to increasing public awareness and responsiveness in supporting legal protection efforts for children involved in drug cases.

According to the author, increasing public awareness is crucial for building an inclusive and sustainable child protection system. Social campaigns and legal education must actively and consistently target families, schools, and mass media.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that legal protection for children as child drug courier is very important to be carried out, this aims to overcome the problem of criminal act and protect their future, including ensuring that they continue to get access to proper education, and focused on rehabilitation and social reintegration, not just punishment. The factors that influence legal protection for children as child drug courier are age, environment, education, and socio-economic conditions. In addition, children who are raised in unstable environments and exposed to violence or criminal activities have a higher risk of falling into drug syndicates. In order for this to run as desired, it is hoped that the government will ensure that children involved as child drug courier get access to proper education and rehabilitation programs to help them get out of the cycle of criminal act and build a better future. It is hoped that the security forces will process cases of child drug courier quickly and responsibly, and apply an approach that is sensitive to the age and special needs of children to ensure their rights are protected during the legal process.

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