| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Actor–Structure Reproduction of Drug Abuse: A Critical Sociological Study in Barru District, Indonesia

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| ABSTRACT

Substance misuse continues to be a pervasive and intricate social problem in Indonesia, impacting both urban and rural populations. In Barru District, South Sulawesi, despite robust communal and religious principles, drug-related offenses have escalated to alarming proportions, with 80% of local prison inmates imprisoned for drug-related offenses. This paradox underscores the need for a more comprehensive understanding that transcends both biological and criminological methodologies. Although prior research frequently emphasizes individual behavior or public health consequences, limited studies have investigated the structural and cultural reasons that perpetuate drug misuse within cohesive communities. This study critically examines the actor-structure dynamics that perpetuate drug-related practices in Barru District. The study employs qualitative approaches, including interviews, observations, and document analysis, to explore the interactions among users, local networks, institutional deficiencies, and cultural legitimization. The findings indicate four principal conclusions: the normalization of drug consumption in daily life; robust user-dealer micro-networks; institutional facilitators like discrepancies in law enforcement and inadequate rehabilitation; and the symbolic authority that legitimizes deviant behavior. These dynamics illustrate a dual process of reproduction, grounded in both agency and structure. The report advocates for a reevaluation of drug policy via community-oriented, culturally relevant interventions and systemic transformation. Subsequent studies ought to incorporate indigenous knowledge and participatory frameworks to facilitate sustainable transformation.

1. Introduction

Substance misuse has evolved into a global epidemic that impacts social, economic, health, and security domains. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (Johnson et al., 2022; Akunna & Lucyann, 2023) reports that more than 296 million individuals worldwide utilized drugs in the preceding year, reflecting a 23% rise over the last decade. This remarkable statistic underscores the significant and multifaceted effects of substance addiction that extend beyond individual disorders and become ingrained in societal structures. In developing nations, particularly in Southeast Asia, the complexity of drug-related issues is often exacerbated by fragile institutional structures, socioeconomic inequalities, and limited access to rehabilitation facilities (Azizi et al., 2025; Al-Worafi, 2023; Glynn, 2022; Yenet et al., 2023; Foroughi et al., 2022). The increase in drug-related crimes and the establishment of drug cultures among youth and marginalized groups in Indonesia indicate underlying structural and cultural forces that warrant thorough examination.

In 2022, the Indonesian National Narcotics Agency (BNN) claimed that around 4.8 million individuals in urban and rural regions of the country participated in drug use. The significance of this figure has elicited substantial apprehension among policymakers, academics, and civil society organizations (Dewabhrata et al., 2023; Ismail et al., 2022; Harmadha et al., 2023; Juliansen et al., 2024). Government responses have predominantly focused on punitive measures, prioritizing law enforcement

and the criminalization of users. Nonetheless, these interventions have demonstrated limited efficacy in addressing the fundamental causes of drug-related behaviors (Islam, 2024; Maskály et al., 2021; Hapal, 2021; Bacon, 2024; Schoenfeld & Campbell, 2023). Scholars increasingly contend that a comprehensive, sociologically informed approach is essential for comprehending the perpetuation of drug use and its integration into daily social life. The ongoing prevalence of drug misuse in specific areas, despite rigorous legal measures, indicates underlying systemic and structural factors that facilitate the recurrence and normalization of such behaviors (McNally et al., 2023; Volkow & Blanco, 2023; Belfiore et al., 2024; Ciucă et al., 2023).

Barru District in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, is a noteworthy example. This rather tiny and socially unified region has reported a disturbingly high incidence of drug usage (Sulastiana, 2024; Budiman, 2024; Arwan et al., 2023). Data from local correctional facilities reveal that around 80% of convicts are imprisoned for drug-related offenses, placing the district among those with the highest prevalence rates in the nation. The Barru example is notable not only for the occurrence of drug use but also for its persistence and normalization across many social strata (Paquette et al., 2025; Mitchell, 2022; Beaton & Gerber, 2025; O'Connor et al., 2022). In this context, where conventional norms, social values, and religious practices are notably robust, the persistence of drug networks indicates a reproductive process that transcends individual choice or deviance. It indicates a dynamic interaction between agency and structure—a mutually reinforcing relationship that perpetuates and legitimizes drug-related practices in daily life.

Prior research on substance misuse in Indonesia has predominantly utilized public health, psychological, or criminological perspectives. Although beneficial, these treatments frequently neglect the sociocultural underpinnings that influence, perpetuate, or counteract drug-related behaviors. Research by Neisewander et al. (2012) associates social stress with heightened drug use, whereas Weinberg (2011) examines peer impact in the normalization of drug activity. These studies, however, often prioritize individual risk factors while insufficiently examining the structural contexts in which these behaviors manifest. Budiarta and Sumarni (2020) observed the increasing incidence of drug use in Indonesian regions but did not elucidate the role of social institutions and power structures in its continuation. The influence of local authorities, informal networks, and symbolic systems in the perpetuation of drug behaviors is notably underexamined.

Sociological contributions to drug research have provided significant insights into power, agency, and social structure (Suckert, 2022; Zhang et al., 2024; Corby, 2023; Laaser & Karlsson, 2025). Bourdieu's theory of practice, encompassing the fundamental notions of habitus, field, and capital, provides a sophisticated framework for comprehending the internalization and reproduction of drug-related behaviors throughout generations (Piatkowski et al., 2024; Jamula, 2021; Brown, 2024). Anthony Giddens' structuration theory similarly reconciles the duality of structure and agency, emphasizing that social practices are recursively generated and sustained through individual actions and institutional frameworks (Farrall, 2021; Nehemia & Iyamu, 2023; Lo, 2025; Anam, 2025). These theories transcend reductionist interpretations of drug use, perceiving it as a socially constructed phenomenon that encompasses interaction, meaning-making, and systemic conditioning.

Notwithstanding these theoretical achievements, practical investigations employing similar frameworks in local Indonesian contexts are still limited. Much of the current literature either lacks conceptual coherence or does not effectively operationalize essential sociological theories in the examination of actual drug networks (Tobing-David et al., 2024; Sisriany & Furuya, 2025; Marín-González et al., 2022; Sirolli et al., 2025). Furthermore, there exists a paucity of research that concurrently examines micro-level agency (e.g., users, dealers, law enforcement) and macro-level structures (e.g., local power dynamics, cultural legitimacy, and state response) (Fischer & Neumann, 2024; Hvidt et al., 2021; Fisher, 2021; Mammadova, 2024). This deficiency constrains our comprehension of the persistence of drug misuse, especially within socially cohesive environments such as Barru District. The prevailing paradigms inadequately elucidate the reasons and mechanisms by which specific individuals persist in drug-related activities despite robust normative, religious, and familial prohibitions.

This study aims to fill that vacuum by utilizing a critical sociological perspective to examine the perpetuation of drug consumption in Barru District. This research examines the interaction between actors and structures to understand how social practices associated with drug use are ingrained, normalized, and sustained within certain cultural and institutional contexts. The research employs qualitative techniques within a critical framework, incorporating comprehensive interviews with users, dealers, community members, and law enforcement officials, with ethnographic observations and document analysis. This methodology enables us to elucidate the intricate dynamics of habitus, symbolic capital, and actor-structure interactions in the perpetuation of drug networks.

This study contributes explicitly to the field by: (1) elucidating the mechanisms through which drug-related behaviors are perpetuated in daily life, (2) examining the symbolic and material capitals that allow specific individuals to circumvent legal or social repercussions, and (3) providing a community-oriented perspective on intervention and prevention. The results indicate that drug misuse in Barru is not exclusively motivated by peer pressure, economic hardship, or media impact, but is also sustained by covert power dynamics, symbolic validation, and inadequate institutional regulation. In this environment, drug use is not merely an act of individual transgression but a socially ingrained practice that mirrors the tensions and inequalities of the local social order.

This study contends that the ongoing prevalence of drug misuse in Barru District is attributable to a dual process: individual agents maneuver through their socio-economic limitations while concurrently being influenced by lenient institutional and cultural frameworks. Through the application of sociological theory and empirical evidence, we illustrate how these actors

and structures together generate a normalized culture of drug use, consequently undercutting state-led interventions. This study advances the literature by transitioning from individual blame to a systemic critique, advocating for structural reform and participative, community-based recovery programs that acknowledge the integration of drug activities within local social contexts.

This research highlights the necessity of reevaluating drug policy and preventive methods from a critical sociological perspective. We advocate for a paradigm of social intervention that transcends biological and criminological methods, emphasizing the interconnectedness of agency and structure. This is especially crucial in areas such as Barru District, where formal institutions may be feeble, yet informal systems of significance and authority continue to wield substantial influence. Comprehending these processes is crucial for developing more successful and sustainable drug intervention programs in Indonesia and comparable worldwide contexts.

2. Method
2.1 Research Design

This research utilized a qualitative methodology rooted in the critical sociological framework. The qualitative design was used to elucidate the depth and complexity of social realities related to drug abuse in Barru District, focusing on lived experiences, contextual comprehension, and the dynamic interactions among actors and systems. The critical paradigm, grounded on theories of power, domination, and resistance, underpins the examination of how structural factors and social practices converge to perpetuate drug-related behaviors. This viewpoint dismisses neutral or value-free investigation, promoting transformative research that uncovers concealed power dynamics and fosters emancipatory transformation. This study examines the actor-structure interaction to reveal how individuals influence and are influenced by the macro-social systems in which they exist. This method is especially pertinent for examining the persistence of substance addiction in cohesive communities, because normative behaviors can obscure the structural and institutional reasons that perpetuate them.

2.2 Research Site and Context

The study was performed in Barru District, a coastal area in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Barru is characterized by its close-knit communities and robust cultural and religious traditions, presenting a strange social landscape defined by cohesion and tradition alongside shockingly high rates of drug-related charges. Local correctional statistics indicates that over 80% of detainees in the district's detention facilities are imprisoned for drug-related offenses, positioning it among the highest rates in the province. Notwithstanding its very modest population and communal framework, substance misuse has emerged as a pervasive and normalized issue in this area. The choice of Barru as the research location was determined by the intensity and the integration of drug-related activities in daily life. The area presents a distinctive opportunity to examine how entrenched structural elements and individual behaviors perpetuate drug usage, providing a fertile ground for critical sociological analysis of normative deviance and institutional tolerance.

2.3 Participants and Sampling Strategy

The participants in this study were chosen to represent significant stakeholders within the framework of drug misuse in Barru District. The participants were former and current drug users, minor dealers and local distributors, community leaders, religious authorities, and law enforcement personnel, including local police and officers from the National Narcotics Agency (BNN). A purposive sample method was utilized to guarantee that participants occupied pertinent roles inside the actor–structure framework, facilitating a more profound comprehension of the relational dynamics that underpin drug activities. A snowball sampling technique was employed to reach concealed or difficult-to-access people, specifically active users and dealers. Preliminary interactions facilitated the identification and connection with supplementary members included inside the drug network. The study involved 24 informants, including 8 users, 5 dealers, 4 community representatives, and 7 law enforcement officials. Participants exhibited diversity in age, occupation, and socio-economic status, providing a wide array of viewpoints essential to the study's analytical objectives.

Table 1. Research Participants by Group

Participant Group	Number of Participants
Former and Active Drug Users	8
Small-scale Dealers and Distributors	5
Community Leaders and Religious Figures	4
Law Enforcement Officials	7

Table 1 presents a comprehensive analysis of the study's 24 participants categorized into four principal actor groups engaged in the drug abuse framework in Barru District. The predominant group comprised former and current drug users (8 participants), succeeded by law enforcement officers (7), minor dealers (5), and community leaders or religious figures (4). This

classification illustrates the purposive sampling technique used to represent both the micro-level (users and dealers) and macro-level (community and enforcement) aspects of the actor-structure interaction. Each group provides distinct perspectives on the social reproduction of drug abuse, facilitating a more comprehensive and contextual comprehension of the problem.

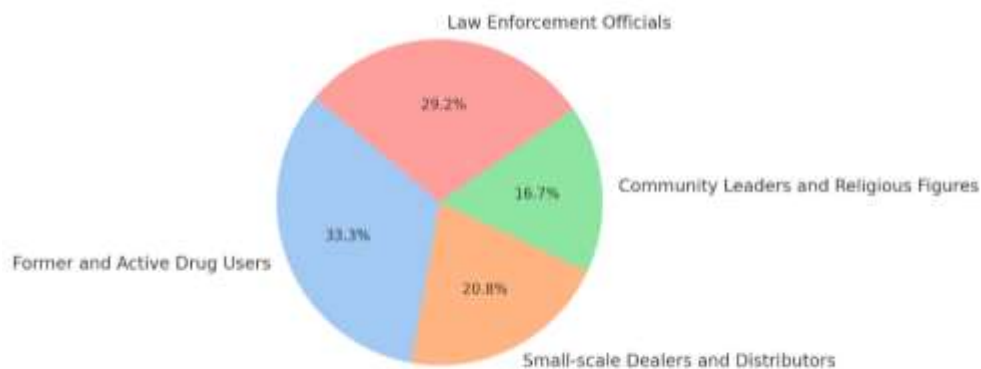Figure 1. Distribution of Research Participants by Group

Figure 1 visually depicts the proportional distribution of the study's participants. Former and current drug users constitute the predominant segment at 33.3%, underscoring the significance of lived experience in this research. Law enforcement officials closely follow at 29.2%, highlighting their institutional viewpoint on drug regulation. Small-scale dealers constitute 20.8%, signifying the functional tier of local drug networks. Community leaders and religious personalities provide the remaining 16.7%, offering perspectives on normative and moral discourses related to drug misuse. The graphic illustrates the varied yet complementary functions of each group within the actor-structure system being examined.

2.4 Data Collection Techniques

This study utilized three principal data collection methods to guarantee a comprehensive and triangulated comprehension of the actor-structure dynamics in drug misuse. Initially, comprehensive semi-structured interviews were performed with 24 participants, concentrating on their lived experiences, perceptions of normalization, and the perceived roles of social and institutional actors in the continuation of drug addiction. These interviews facilitated adaptability while preserving theme coherence. Secondly, participant observation was conducted at community assemblies, informal dialogues, and local customs, yielding insights into societal norms, rituals, and quotidian activities associated with drug use and enforcement. This method facilitated a contextual comprehension of the social construction and acceptance of behavior. Third, a study of documents was performed on official reports from the National Narcotics Agency (BNN), local police records, judicial rulings, and minutes from community meetings. The records offered institutional insights and validated interview and observational data, enhancing the study's analytical rigor via source triangulation.

2.5 Data Analysis

The data were examined utilizing a descriptive-analytical coding methodology in conjunction with thematic analysis based on interpretive sociology. The analytical procedure commenced with open coding of interview transcripts, observational notes, and documents, facilitating the emergence of repeating patterns and themes inductively. Themes were further classified and analyzed using Bourdieu's notions of habitus, capital, and field, alongside Giddens' structuration theory, which highlights the interplay between agency and structure in influencing social activities. Narrative creation was employed to synthesize individual testimonies and situational observations into cohesive stories that represent the lived experiences of drug actors in Barru. Triangulation was employed by cross-validating results across many data sources—interviews, observations, and documents—to ensure reliability and comprehensiveness. Analytical memoing was used throughout the process to document theoretical discoveries, reflections, and connections, while coding frameworks were iteratively adjusted to fit emerging patterns with the study's essential sociological aims.

2.6 Validity and Trustworthiness

Multiple procedures were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. The primary method employed was triangulation of sources, which entailed cross-verifying data obtained from interviews, participant observations, and document analysis to bolster trustworthiness. Member checking involved presenting initial interpretations to chosen participants to validate the precision and relevance of their tales. Peer debriefing entailed collaborative dialogues with colleagues and academic supervisors to rigorously analyze emerging themes, challenge assumptions, and enhance analytical insights. The study included a robust component of reflexivity, in which the researcher consciously recognized and reflected on personal biases, positionality,

and potential effects on data interpretation. This continuous self-awareness facilitated the reduction of subjectivity and upheld ethical rigor during the study process. Collectively, these methodologies guaranteed that the results accurately reflected the intricate actor-structure dynamics of drug usage within the study environment, while maintaining methodological transparency and integrity.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

This study rigorously complied with ethical research principles to safeguard participants and uphold the integrity of the research process. Informed consent was secured from all participants following a comprehensive explanation of the study's objectives, procedures, and their entitlement to withdraw at any time without repercussions. To safeguard identities, all data were anonymized with pseudonyms, and identifiable information was omitted from transcripts and reports. The research obtained ethical approval from the Postgraduate Research Ethics Committee at Universitas Negeri Makassar, guaranteeing adherence to institutional and national ethical standards. Due to the study's emphasis on sensitive and possibly incriminating subjects, particularly with illegal drug use and distribution, stringent confidentiality measures were implemented. Interview data were securely maintained in password-protected folders, with access to raw information restricted solely to the principal investigator. These approaches guaranteed participant safety, fostered trust, and maintained ethical accountability, particularly when interacting with vulnerable populations and confronting the structural intricacies of unlawful activity.

3. Results

3.1 Persistence of Drug Abuse in a Cohesive Community

Research indicates that substance misuse in Barru District continues unabated, notwithstanding robust communal bonds and religious principles that generally deter deviant conduct. Interviews with users and community members suggest that drug use has progressively been acceptable, particularly among adolescents and casual labor groups. Numerous individuals articulated that drug consumption is integrated into daily routines, frequently occurring discreetly within peer groups or familial settings. A former user described that drug usage was initially presented as a "social bonding activity" and subsequently evolved into a routine aspect of daily life. Observations corroborated these statements, indicating that specific communities exhibit passive tolerance towards drug use, particularly when it does not result in immediate societal disturbance. Community leaders acknowledged the prevalent usage but indicated a deficiency in competence or authority to take action. The normalizing process seems to be bolstered by "hidden acceptance," a social phenomena characterized by vocal criticism that is seldom manifested in action. Peer impact is crucial, as numerous individuals commence drug usage through intimate acquaintances or family members. The findings indicate that community cohesion may paradoxically facilitate the continuation of drug culture, particularly when accompanied by silence, denial, and ambivalence from authority officials and families.

Table 2. Themes on Drug Abuse Persistence

Theme	Frequency of Mentions
Normalization of Drug Use in Daily Life	18
Peer Influence and Initiation	15
Community Awareness but Inaction	12
Hidden Acceptance by Families	10
Religious Leaders' Limited Engagement	9

Table 2 summarizes the primary emergent themes regarding the continuation of substance use in Barru District, derived from participant interviews and observational data. The predominant topic identified was the normalization of drug use in everyday life (18 references), closely followed by peer influence and initiation (15 mentions), underscoring the significance of social networks. Additional significant elements encompass communal awareness coupled with inaction, covert acceptance by families, and minimal involvement by religious leaders. These data indicate a complicated interaction between cultural coherence and social quiet, implying that passive tolerance and symbolic acceptance perpetuate the ongoing prevalence of drug-related behaviors.

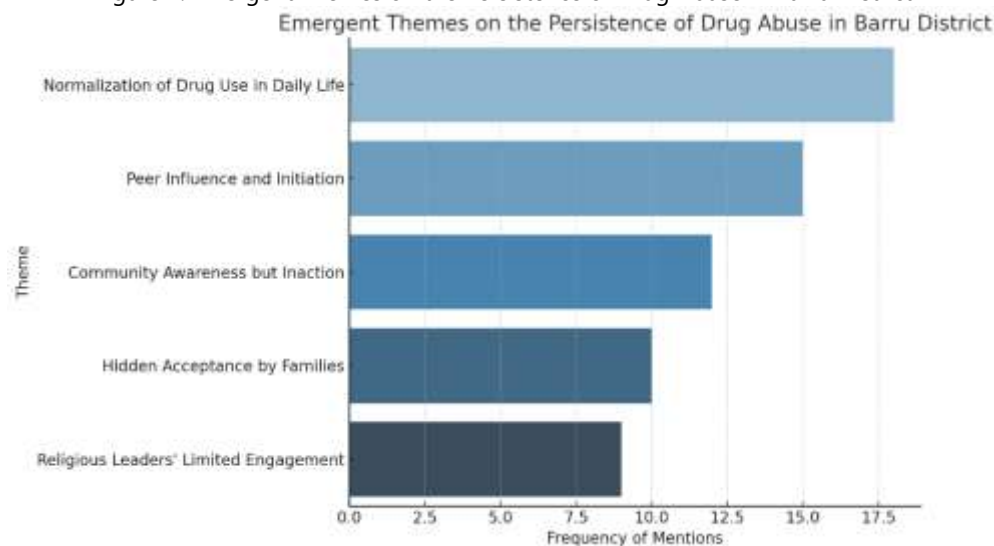Figure 2. Emergent Themes on the Persistence of Drug Abuse in Barru District

Figure 2 illustrates the prevalence of themes derived from qualitative data concerning the persistence of drug misuse in Barru District. The predominant frequency was ascribed to the normalization of drug consumption in daily activities, illustrating how deviance becomes ingrained in local social life. Peer influence was substantial, indicating that social circles significantly impact first exposure and continued usage. Community leaders and families display knowledge yet show minimal intervention, while religious authorities are seldom proactive. The figure illustrates that these interconnected social and institutional variables jointly perpetuate drug misuse behaviors within an ostensibly unified society.

3.2 Actor Networks and Micro-Level Dynamics

The research uncovers an intricate web of micro-level relationships that perpetuate drug usage in Barru District. Interviews with users and local traffickers reveal a network of trust-based relationships in which drug transactions transpire through informal, secretive, and frequently familial alliances. User-dealer interactions exhibit mutual dependence: users depend on a reliable supply, while dealers foster loyalty through adaptable payment arrangements and safeguarding against external risks. Numerous transactions occur without immediate monetary exchange, indicating a significant level of social embeddedness. Local distribution functions via neighborhood-centric channels, frequently utilizing residences or stalls as discreet hubs. This informal structure relies on communal silence and the purposeful utilization of social media platforms—particularly encrypted messaging applications—to facilitate communication, organize transactions, and escape law enforcement identification. Numerous participants observed that digital platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger serve as essential instruments for covert collaboration. Observations indicate that drug transactions frequently take place in familiar, low-surveillance locations such as alleyways, residential stores, or vacant lots. These findings suggest that micro-level dynamics of trust, location, and digital mediation facilitate the ongoing circulation of drugs beneath the formal structures of the community. The robustness of these networks is founded on common interests, localized expertise, and social concealing strategies.

Table 3. Micro-Level Drug Network Dynamics

Micro-Level Theme	Frequency of Mentions
User-Dealer Mutual Dependency	16
Neighborhood-Based Drug Distribution	14
Use of Social Media Platforms	13
Flexible Payment and Trust System	11
Kinship or Friendship-Based Alliances	10

Table 3 delineates essential features that illustrate the micro-level processes facilitating the endurance of drug misuse networks in Barru District. The predominant theme identified is the interdependence between users and dealers (16 references), emphasizing trust and the frequency of repeated transactions. Additional notable themes include community-oriented distribution networks and the strategic use of social media platforms for coordination. Flexible payment mechanisms and kinship-based alliances suggest that these networks operate within entrenched social structures rather than solely on business principles. These findings illustrate the maintenance of drug circulation via informal, social, and digital mechanisms that circumvent institutional regulations.

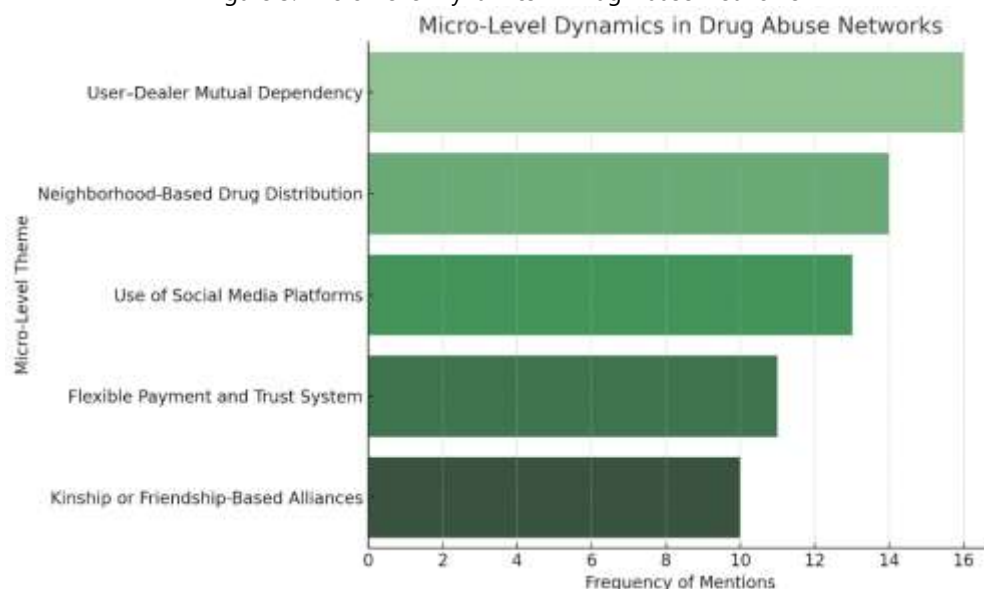Figure 3. Micro-Level Dynamics in Drug Abuse Networks

Figure 3 illustrates the predominance of five micro-level characteristics that contribute to the persistence of drug networks. The foremost element, user–dealer mutual dependency, signifies the relational dynamics of drug distribution in Barru District. Neighborhood-centric exchanges and the utilization of encrypted social media are also prevalent, enabling participants to function covertly. Flexible, trust-based payment methods and kinship-oriented partnerships further strengthen these informal economies. The graphic depicts the convergence of community familiarity, digital tools, and interpersonal trust in facilitating a covert yet robust framework for drug distribution, functioning underneath the observable strata of local governance and enforcement systems.

3.3 Structural Enablers and Institutional Gaps

The results indicate that structural deficiencies substantially exacerbate the ongoing issue of drug misuse in Barru District. Numerous participants, comprising law enforcement officials and community leaders, recognized discrepancies in policing and judicial procedures. Arrests were frequently selective, targeting low-level users while prominent individuals or suppliers escaped prosecution, underscoring clear power imbalances. Corruption and impunity were often reported, as individuals with political or economic influence could use the system, eroding deterrence and community trust. These findings indicate systemic governance problems that permit drug networks to function with considerable impunity. Moreover, the lack of viable rehabilitation programs remained a persistent issue. The majority of users were either criminalized or discharged without adequate treatment or reintegration assistance. Informants observed that rehabilitation was frequently unattainable, particularly for economically disadvantaged individuals, and was devoid of cultural or community-based relevance. Consequently, recidivism persisted at elevated levels. An review of municipal policies revealed a disjointed approach, characterized by insufficient cooperation among health providers, law enforcement, and social organizations. These institutional deficiencies have fostered an environment where drug misuse is not merely tolerated but, in certain instances, indirectly promoted. Consequently, structural restructuring is essential for successful long-term intervention and societal transformation.

Table 4. Structural Enablers and Institutional Gaps

Structural Issue	Frequency of Mentions
Law Enforcement Inconsistencies and Power Asymmetries	17
Corruption and Impunity in Drug Cases	16
Lack of Follow-through in Prosecutions	14
Absence of Sustainable Rehabilitation Programs	13
Inaccessibility of Treatment for the Poor	11

Table 4 delineates five principal structural facilitators and institutional deficiencies that perpetuate drug misuse in Barru District. The predominant concern cited was discrepancies in law enforcement and power inequalities (17 references), succeeded by corruption and impunity in drug-related crimes (16 mentions). Participants additionally indicated a deficiency in the execution of legal procedures, shown by ineffective prosecutions and premature discharges. The lack of sustainable rehabilitation

programs and the inaccessibility of therapy for economically disadvantaged individuals were equally troubling. These structural failures reveal how institutional inefficiencies and inequalities perpetuate drug networks and hinder recovery prospects.

Figure 4. Structural Enablers and Institutional Gaps in Drug Control
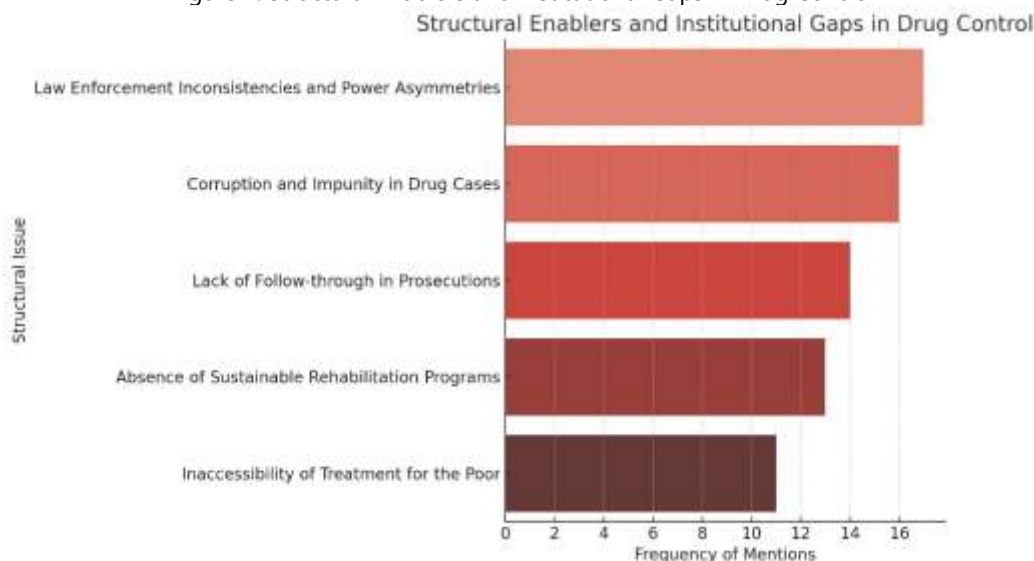

Figure 4 illustrates the presence of significant structural and institutional difficulties observed in the domain. The predominant issue, inconsistencies in law enforcement, illustrates the disparate treatment of offenders and selective prosecution. Corruption and impunity intensify this problem, particularly when influential individuals exploit legal ambiguities. The absence of organized rehabilitation and the financial obstacles to obtaining treatment indicate that the system is ill-prepared for sustainable resolution. Collectively, these structural deficiencies create a conducive atmosphere for the perpetuation of drug-related behaviors. The chart highlights the pressing necessity for structural reforms that emphasize justice, equity, and holistic rehabilitation strategies.

3.4 Cultural Legitimization and Symbolic Power

The results indicate that drug misuse in Barru District is perpetuated not just by structural deficiencies but also by cultural endorsement and symbolic authority. For several individuals, substance use serves as a coping strategy to address financial strain, societal pressure, and emotional isolation. Numerous participants reported utilizing medications to alleviate despair, mitigate worry, or sustain endurance during informal employment. In addition to individual motives, the impact of local people with symbolic capital—such as charismatic peers, musicians, or esteemed community members—was also considerable. These individuals frequently exemplify or tacitly support drug use as an aspect of an alternative lifestyle, influencing youth ideas of its acceptability. Discussions with community and religious leaders uncovered moral complexity in tackling the issue. Although publicly denouncing drug use, some families and religious organizations hesitated to personally address users, whether due to shame, denial, or a conviction in personal redemption. This ambiguity perpetuates quiet and legitimizes misbehavior. Cultural narratives that prioritize tolerance, familial honor, or the sanctity of community cohesion may unintentionally validate ongoing drug use. The symbolic elements illustrate how behavior deemed abnormal is rendered socially acceptable through discourse, silence, and localized authority, hence undermining the effectiveness of formal interventions.

Table 5. Cultural Legitimization and Symbolic Power

Cultural Theme	Frequency of Mentions
Drug Use as Coping Mechanism	15
Influence of Local Figures with Symbolic Capital	14
Moral Ambiguity in Religious Narratives	12
Familial Silence and Denial	11
Normalization through Music and Youth Subcultures	10

Table 5 delineates five predominant cultural elements that facilitate the legitimization of drug abuse in Barru District. The most commonly referenced was drug use as a coping technique (15 instances), underscoring its emotional and practical significance for users. The influence of local figures possessing symbolic capital is also noteworthy, since they indirectly endorse

drug usage through their behavior or lifestyle. Moral ambiguity in religious and familial narratives, together with silence and denial, surfaced as obstacles to direct confrontation. Ultimately, young subcultures and musical movements facilitate the normalization of misbehavior. Collectively, these themes elucidate the manner in which symbolic power influences local acceptance of drug behaviors.

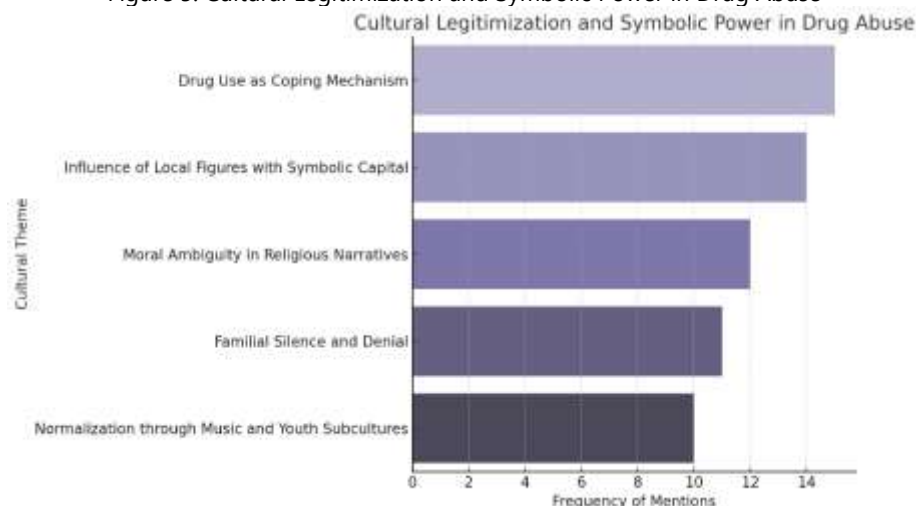Figure 5. Cultural Legitimization and Symbolic Power in Drug Abuse

Figure 5 illustrates the cultural aspects that promote drug misuse in Barru. Coping behavior is the most frequently given rationale, highlighting drug use as a reaction to emotional or financial distress. The symbolic power of local influencers, such as musicians and esteemed classmates, cultivates passive endorsement among adolescents. Religious and familial histories frequently exhibit moral ambiguity, fostering a culture of silence. The normalization of music and youth identity further entrenches these practices in daily social interactions. The figure illustrates the profound entrenchment of cultural mechanisms—anchored in identity, respect, and silence—that facilitate the continuation of drug use in conjunction with and in spite of structural deficiencies.

4. Discussion
4.1 Actor–Structure Interplay in the Reproduction of Drug Practices
This study's findings illustrate a distinct interaction between agency and structure in the perpetuation of drug misuse practices in Barru District, consistent with the critical sociological theories of Bourdieu and Giddens. Utilizing Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, and field, drug use in Barru is not solely a result of deviance or personal choice, but rather the consequence of entrenched dispositions influenced by lived experiences, constrained opportunities, and normalized social contexts. The habitus of drug users, shaped by continuous exposure to stress, economic adversity, and community acceptance, predisposes individuals to view drug use as a sensible or essential behavior. Concurrently, their social capital (peer networks, familial connections) and symbolic capital (esteem from subcultural peers) enable them to traverse the "field" of informal drug economies with considerable ease and durability.

Giddens' theory of structuration elucidates that persons are not only passive outcomes of structure but actively engage in reflective agency under structurally determined constraints (Bouchard, 2021; Archer, 2024; Sun & Wu, 2024). Users and small-scale dealers adapt and make decisions, although their activities are consistently influenced by persistent institutional failures, cultural legitimization, and power imbalances. The duality of structure is apparent: individuals replicate the social conditions that influence their behavior. The ongoing prevalence of drug misuse in Barru results from mutual reinforcement, wherein individual behaviors and social institutions together shape a reality that perpetuates drug culture. Consequently, interventions must tackle both micro-agency and macro-structural dynamics.

4.2 The Duality of Power: Resistance and Complicity
The study underscores a paradoxical duality in the exercise of authority in Barru District, notably regarding law enforcement and community conduct. Law enforcement agencies function as official regulatory entities, responsible for enforcing anti-drug regulations and executing arrests. Conversely, participants and documents indicate that these institutions also demonstrate leniency, permitting specific actors—especially those with wealth or political connections—to evade accountability. This power imbalance leads to selective enforcement, as low-level users are criminalized, and high-level distributors frequently function with implicit protection. Such activities indicate not only institutional failure but also institutional complicity, wherein systems intended to mitigate drug abuse may unintentionally facilitate its perpetuation.

At the community level, silence functions as a nuanced kind of resistance or self-preservation. Community members—especially families, neighbors, and religious leaders—frequently recognize drug-related behaviors yet opt not to report or intervene (Müller et al., 2024; Mensitieri et al., 2025; He & Chang, 2025). This quiet may signify fear, impotence, or an effort to preserve societal cohesion. In certain instances, it may serve as a coping strategy or a form of quiet defiance against institutions perceived as corrupt or ineffective. In others, it denotes complicity arising from survival within structurally limited environments. Consequently, both institutional and community actors exhibit an indistinct boundary between resistance and cooperation, as well as between enforcement and tolerance. The duality of power must be thoroughly examined in any effective drug policy, as it demonstrates how both action and inaction perpetuate drug-related behaviors in structurally vulnerable situations.

4.3 Symbolic Violence and the Naturalization of Deviance

This study illustrates that drug consumption in Barru District is sustained not only by institutional inadequacies but also by symbolic violence, a non-physical form of domination as defined by Bourdieu. Symbolic violence occurs when dominant norms and meanings are perceived as natural or legitimate, even by those who suffer from their effects. In Barru, drug use has gradually assimilated into a "doxic" environment—a domain where particular ideas, practices, and acts are no longer subject to examination. Continuous exposure and normalization of drug-related behavior become established in the habitus of individuals, shaping their perceptions of what is acceptable, attainable, and even necessary within their social environment.

For many individuals, particularly adolescents and casual laborers, drug use is regarded not as aberrant behavior but as a rational response to structural constraints or psychological distress. Notable community members—such as local musicians, respected individuals, or former inmates with symbolic capital—bolster these perspectives, cultivating a society where drug use is simultaneously shamed and exalted. The community's silence and the ambivalence of religious and familial narratives reinforce this acceptance, rendering resistance difficult and deviance inconspicuous.

By wielding symbolic power, these cultural and social factors engender complicity without compulsion, making structural domination appear legitimate or inevitable (Hoffmann, 2024; Croizet & Millet, 2024). As a result, violation becomes normalized, and efforts to intervene are often perceived as disruptive rather than therapeutic. To effectively address drug addiction, interventions must deconstruct these erroneous assumptions and engage with the cultural logics that sustain symbolic legitimization at both individual and community levels.

4.4 Beyond Individual Blame: Rethinking Policy and Intervention

This study's findings challenge the efficacy of punitive methods for addressing drug usage, which emphasize individual responsibility while overlooking the wider socio-cultural and structural factors that facilitate deviant conduct. In Barru District, imprisonment is the primary solution; however, recidivism rates are elevated, and rehabilitation initiatives are scarce. Criminalizing users without considering their lived experiences—such as economic marginalization, peer pressure, and emotional turmoil—merely perpetuates cycles of exclusion and replicates the conditions that engender drug dependence. Furthermore, selective enforcement and corruption within legal institutions undermine the credibility of punitive laws.

This study promotes a transition to community-oriented and culturally relevant solutions. Rehabilitation should extend beyond clinical frameworks to incorporate local knowledge, familial connections, and religious leaders as integral components of a comprehensive reintegration and healing plan (Koopman, 2023; Agung et al., 2024). Locally rooted initiatives—such as youth mentorship, faith-based recovery programs, and peer-led outreach—can more successfully tackle the normative and relational aspects of drug usage.

Moreover, systemic reform and grassroots empowerment are necessary. Policy frameworks should transcend top-down enforcement and prioritize local governance, education, and sustainable livelihood prospects (Mulder, 2023; Marienfeldt et al., 2025; Reuter, 2025). Community members should be empowered not merely as recipients of assistance, but as proactive agents of transformation. When local actors possess resources, agency, and legitimacy, they can confront the symbolic and structural causes that perpetuate deviance. Ultimately, tackling drug usage in settings such as Barru necessitates a comprehensive, collaborative strategy that addresses power dynamics, inequality, and cultural complicity at their core.

5. Conclusion

This study has analyzed the persistence of drug misuse in Barru District, Indonesia, via the perspective of critical sociology, emphasizing the actor-structure interaction that perpetuates drug-related behaviors throughout time. Anchored in the theoretical paradigms of Bourdieu and Giddens, the research examined the interplay between individual agency, social habitus, and institutional frameworks in normalizing and perpetuating drug use within a culturally unified yet structurally vulnerable context.

The results indicate four primary dynamics. Initially, substance misuse in Barru is profoundly ingrained in everyday life and legitimized by peer associations, familial reticence, and communal apathy. The endurance of micro-level networks, defined by trust-based interactions between users and dealers as well as digital coordination, perpetuates informal drug markets. Third, structural facilitators such as selective law enforcement, institutional corruption, and the lack of durable rehabilitation programs

substantially weaken formal responses. Cultural elements, such as symbolic power, coping narratives, and moral ambiguity in religious discourse, facilitate the legitimization and normalization of deviant behavior.

These insights indicate that effective approaches to drug usage must transcend individual culpability and punitive measures. Future policy should promote culturally sensitive, community-oriented rehabilitation initiatives and institutional restructuring. Empowering grassroots individuals as catalysts for change is essential for dismantling the perpetuation of drug culture and promoting sustainable recovery.

Subsequent research may build upon this study by investigating longitudinal variations in actor-structure interactions or by contrasting analogous communities employing other intervention methods. A multidisciplinary strategy incorporating public health, legislative reform, and indigenous knowledge may produce more complete methods for significant, enduring impact.

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