



## THE DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL SOLIDARITY IN URBAN YOUTH DELINQUENCY: A Case Study of Bengkulu City

**Nindi Yulia Puspita Sari, Panji Suminar, Diyas Widiyarti**  
Universitas Bengkulu

Jl. WR. Supratman, Kec. Muara Bangka Hulu, Sumatera, Bengkulu 38371,  
[nindy68@gmail.com](mailto:nindy68@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

This study analyzes recurring collective delinquency among adolescent gangster groups aged 15–18 years in Bengkulu City, focusing on social dynamics and post-criminal activity adaptation. Employing Émile Durkheim's Mechanical Solidarity Theory, a descriptive qualitative method with in-depth interviews was applied to informants actively involved in 2024. Results indicate that adolescent involvement is driven by strong Mechanical Solidarity formation, where social cohesion, trust, and daily interactions serve as primary bonds, compensating for weak conventional social ties indicated by family emotional neglect and structural gaps in residential environments. This solidarity generates Delinquent Collective Consciousness, manifested through Repressive Law and driven by collective deindividuation. Crucially, 2025 findings reveal strategic adaptation: the group's decision to cease criminal activities, triggered by increased legal risks (Formal Social Control), while maintaining solidarity through non-criminal activities. This confirms that for adolescents, preserving social bonds outweighs continuing criminal acts. The study concludes that Delinquent Mechanical Solidarity represents a functional response to affection deficits and limited community involvement in Bengkulu.

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Groups or gangs are social phenomena that consistently emerge across various generations; their existence reflects the social development process of individuals that is formed and maintained through continuous social interaction. In the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI, 2025), a gang is defined as a group formed on the basis of shared background, environment, or specific interests. With various similarities, individuals will gather and form a group to communicate and create a social group. Groups themselves are usually formed during adolescence, because this is when individuals are searching for their identity and forming the meaning of life. This occurs because in the adolescent phase, individuals begin to move toward adult life, which is considered to have independent living, causing individuals to face many difficulties (Novrianti *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, individuals need to be in an environment that suits them.

According to Hendriati (in Ajhuri, 2019), generally, adolescence is divided into three parts: early adolescence (12-15 years), middle adolescence (15-18 years), and late adolescence (19-22 years). Within this age range, individuals are in a phase of searching for self-identity characterized by increased need for social recognition, group solidarity, and tendency to adapt to their social environment. In this condition, adolescents are more vulnerable to becoming involved in peer groups that potentially lead to deviant behavior if not accompanied by adequate self-control (Munawaroh, 2015). The social control referred to is self-control over the adolescent environment, where adolescents can distinguish between good and bad behavior for themselves.

However, in its development, groups do not always lead toward positive groups (Amin, 2015), some of them actually become groups with criminal tendencies, thus creating potential social disruption. Deviations committed collectively are known as group deviations (Anton *et al.*, 2025). Adolescents as individuals in the developmental phase toward adulthood have high vulnerability to environmental influences, especially peer groups (Salvatore *et al.*, 2024). This condition causes adolescents to be vulnerable to exploring new behaviors, including deviant behaviors, especially when they are in emotionally strong friendship groups.

Adolescent groups that engage in deviant actions are often referred to as juvenile delinquency (Jasmiari & Herdiansah, 2022). The term gangster is frequently

used to refer to groups that engage in criminal activity. According to Yamil Anwar, gangsters are groups of people who have the same goals or associations of people who have common interests but engage in negative behavior or criminal behavior (in Parastih, 2023). Therefore, adolescent groups that engage in criminal activities or deviations that can endanger others as well as themselves are also often referred to as gangsters.

Gangsters are usually formed informally through friendship bonds that then develop into groups with certain structures and symbols. They typically engage in criminal acts such as brawls, threats, and the use of sharp weapons that can disturb public security and order (Kharunisa & Eko Wahyudi, 2024). The motivations underlying adolescent involvement in gangster groups are diverse; they tend to do so due to several factors such as the search for identity, peer pressure, solidarity among friends, or even due to lack of family attention (Pramono & Siagian, 2024).

Incidents of juvenile delinquency and high rates of criminality among adolescents are often associated with family dysfunction or social environment problems (Karlina, 2020). So far, families have often been associated with and considered unable to guide children properly, which ultimately drives adolescents toward deviant behavior and reaps negative views from society. However, other factors also trigger adolescent involvement in gangster groups, such as peer influence, social environment, and social media exposure, which play roles in shaping behavioral patterns and identity.

Gangster groups engage in many criminal acts such as brawls, threats, and other crimes that cause social unrest (Adillah et al., 2024). The motivation and involvement of adolescents in gangster groups are not singular but multidimensional. Various studies show that the search for identity, the need for recognition, peer influence, solidarity impulses, and minimal family control are quite dominant factors. Lack of parental supervision, unresponsive parenting patterns, and weak internalization of moral values increase the likelihood of adolescents seeking new identities outside the family environment. When they find acceptance in gangster groups, emotional bonds and loyalty become stronger than prevailing social values.

Adolescent involvement in groups that engage in deviant actions to criminal activities that violate the law can be detrimental to various parties, including the

individuals themselves. Criminal acts committed by adolescents can affect their criminal records and make it difficult later when they are in a positive community environment (Bobyanti, 2023). Building a good view in society will create good acceptance in society as well. However, in this research, the form of acceptance expected by adolescents tends more toward their group. This is not without reason but rather based on the solidarity built from the beginning. Solidarity is a form of mutual trust that reflects acceptance of something regarding the activities being carried out (Pratama et al., 2024).

Several previous studies have shown that gangster activities demonstrate complex social dynamics, such as research conducted by Irmayani (2018), which examined adolescent involvement in motorcycle gangs and found causative factors of involvement, forms of criminality, and handling strategies. Subsequent research by Putra & Suryadinata (2020) examined the klitih phenomenon in Yogyakarta through Max Weber's social action perspective and confirmed that adolescent violence often occurs spontaneously without consideration of social norms. Other research conducted by Pramono & Siagian (2024) analyzed the driving factors of adolescent involvement in gangsters in City X based on social control theory and concluded that the need for recognition and peer group pressure play a major role.

**Image 1: a 2024 gangster case in Bengkulu City**



Source: Electronic news by Bengkulu City police TB, 2025

Gangster cases also occur in Bengkulu City, as shown in Figure 1, which explains the arrest carried out by the Bengkulu City Police against a mob attack committed by a group of adolescents involved in a motorcycle gang. Such cases frequently occurred in Bengkulu City in 2024. This became the researcher's interest in understanding why adolescents become involved in gangster actions or criminal groups in Bengkulu City, as well as the reasons why they continue to gather in groups that engage in deviance. To analyze these findings more comprehensively, Emile Durkheim's Mechanical Solidarity Theory is used.

The concept of solidarity possessed by adolescents is a concept based on trust. This becomes interesting research because until 2025, the group still continues to gather even though they no longer engage in deviant activities. Mechanical Solidarity Theory explains that in homogeneous traditional societies, social solidarity is formed through shared values, norms, and strong social bonds, where individuals are mechanically integrated into the group. Deviation occurs when this solidarity is disrupted by social change, such as role differentiation or modernization. In the context of adolescent gangsters, this theory is used to explain how adolescents who are vulnerable to social transition become involved in gangster groups as a form of seeking alternative mechanical solidarity when family or community bonds are weak.

## **B. METHODS**

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to understand adolescent involvement in gangster groups and to identify the forms of solidarity that exist within these groups, in accordance with the methodology outlined by Sugiyono (2023). The qualitative approach allows exploration of rich data without limiting informant statements. The data collection techniques used consist of: (1) Non-participant observation, which is a technique of observing informant activities without being directly involved; (2) Semi-structured interviews conducted with open and flexible questions to explore additional information in depth; and (3) Documentation in the form of collecting relevant secondary data such as photos, recordings, electronic news, or police records. This research is located in Bengkulu City, with the main research informants being adolescents who have been involved in gangster activities or have groups that engage in criminal acts. The selection of

informants was carried out using purposive sampling technique based on specific criteria and research objectives.

### C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research focuses on the dynamics of adolescent gangster groups in Bengkulu City. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with four key informants, represented by the initials RB, MF, TR, and AK. All informant name initials are used as pseudonyms to maintain identity confidentiality. Informants RB and MF come from informal groups, while TR and AK are members of an organized group, which in this research is referred to as Group KD (group pseudonym). The four informants are adolescents aged 15–18 years who were involved in collective delinquent activities or gangster groups in 2024.

Two typologies were found in the groups joined by research informants who are adolescents in Bengkulu City. Typology is a grouping with the same structural characteristics and possessing the same basic nature (Bali & Naim, 2020), while structural refers to arrangement or pattern. Structural typology means a grouping phenomenon based on patterns and arrangements that have similar characteristics within the group. The two structural typologies found are: (1) organized groups with formal identity and symbols, and (2) groups formed informally without identity and management structure. Despite being structurally different, both typologies show similar patterns of collective delinquency such as brawls, threats, and the use of sharp weapons without authorization from authorities. This finding indicates that formal structure is not the main determining factor for deviance, but rather the intensity of social relations and internal group cohesion.

**Table 1. File on a 15-18 years old**

No	Year	Number of Cases	
		Cases	Suspects
1	2023	3	12
2	2024	2	15
3	2025	1	8
	Number	6	35

Source: Polresta Bengkulu, 2025

In Table 1, data on adolescent gangster cases from 2023–2025 involving adolescents aged 15–18 years were obtained. In 2023, there were three gangster cases with 12 suspects; in 2024, two cases with 15 suspects; and in 2025, one case with 8 suspects. Adolescents involved in criminal groups cannot be made suspects without specific reasons, even though there are juvenile police officers who supervise children involved in cases. This is because the Child Protection Law stipulates that children under 18 years of age cannot be legally processed and will be returned to their parents or school authorities for follow-up action. However, the police can process minors if there are serious violations, such as the use of sharp weapons. The number of cases in the table represents cases that can be processed by the police, with the note that they will not be imprisoned but must undergo diversion, which is the action of diverting the settlement of child cases from the formal path to a path outside the criminal justice system, such as mediation between both parties.

RB, aged 17 years, always gathers with his group, which includes informant MF, aged 16 years. The intensity of the group's daily interactions, which last until dawn, strengthens the group's social integration, making the basecamp a space for the production of mechanical solidarity. The gathering location of this group moves around depending on the situation when they want to join a particular group. Informants RB and MF explained that when they want to gather, they will arrive simultaneously. Their activities when gathering also do not involve many strange things; they just sit and gather while playing online games and listening to each other's stories. After that, they ride around on motorcycles just to eliminate boredom, although this group rarely does this because, according to RB's statement, they rarely engage in criminal acts because the group's purpose is to play and fill their inner emptiness.

Informants TR and AK, aged 17 years, who come from the KD group, have flexible gathering times where they can gather in the morning or evening depending on when the group wants to come at any time. This is because the location referred to as the group's basecamp is truly considered a home for the group. If they feel lonely and have no activities, the basecamp becomes their main destination. The basecamp location was initially at a local shop as a gathering place while playing games, but after the formation of group identity and engaging in criminal actions,

the group chose to find a hidden gathering location. This was done to avoid the police or secure themselves after carrying out dangerous actions.

Trust among members indirectly forms strong solidarity, which then develops into an impulse to support group actions, whether good or deviant actions (Pramono & Siagian, 2024). The four informants did not engage in deviant actions without reason; the actions carried out were based on trust and a sense of solidarity that the group had built from the beginning. Informants RB and MF, for example, are childhood friends who joined a deviant group without identity, while informants TR and AK are peers from the same environment who joined a deviant group with identity, namely the KD group.

Field findings reveal that the essence of youth involvement in gangster group activities in Bengkulu City is not based on a well-structured formal organizational structure, but rather stems from the intensity of relations and internal cohesion among individuals within it. Interestingly, both organized and informal groups exhibit similar patterns of deviant behavior, which explains that strong social bonds are the primary driving force behind adolescent delinquent actions. Intense daily interactions and mutual trust ultimately create what can be termed a 'second home' for adolescents to obtain what they cannot get in other environments, such as comfort and recognition. In the social space, criminal acts are no longer the initial goal, but rather a form of dedication or loyalty to the group. This phenomenon is then examined through Emile Durkheim's Theory of Mechanical Social Solidarity (1893), which observes how shared fate and experiences can trap individuals in collective consciousness (Maliki, 2012). Therefore, this theory will explain how the weakening of individual social control, the formation of mechanical solidarity, the emergence of delinquent collective consciousness, and group adaptation to formal social control contribute to maintaining collective delinquency in these two types of adolescent gangster groups. There is a tendency for adolescents to move toward strong solidarity that is formed from the beginning of the group's establishment.

### **Causative Factor in the Form of Weakening Individual Social Control**

Strong mechanical solidarity does not emerge suddenly but grows amid the weakening of social bonds that should function as supports for adolescent behavior. In Durkheim's perspective, the weakening of basic social institutions such

as family bonds can open space for the formation of alternative solidarity that is not aligned with societal norms, such as gangster groups that can become a new space for individuals.

*Emotional Neglect in the Family*, the family is fundamentally the primary source of conventional mechanical solidarity, where values, norms, and a sense of attachment are first instilled, especially for a child who, based on experience, is only bound to the family. However, after entering adolescence and becoming acquainted with the outside world, they gain other options regarding forms of attachment (Wijaya et al., 2018). However, research findings show that the majority of informants experienced emotional absence in the family environment, whether due to parental divorce, domestic conflicts, or limited interaction time due to economic demands. Informant RB, who comes from a broken home, explained that his parents separated on bad terms, and therefore he felt little attachment within his family. As a result, he often played outside the home until late at night or even until dawn just to avoid the quarrels that occurred at home in 2024.

*"...My parents are already separated, now I live with my grandmother, mother, and younger sibling. Usually, back then when my parents used to fight, I would just go out and hang around outside the house"* Informant RB, 2025.

In an interview conducted with informant RB in 2025, he explained that RB's parents officially divorced, causing RB to continue engaging in activities with his group to fill the emptiness within himself. Meanwhile, the other three informants come from intact families, but the role of both parents they receive is considered lacking, where every day both parents of the three informants are busy with their work until late at night, causing the research informants to feel lonely when at home. As a result, the research informants prefer to gather with their groups and engage in activities that are enjoyable for themselves and their groups.

Other informants (MF, TR, AK) come from intact families, but the role of both parents is considered lacking due to work commitments until late at night. This condition shows that the physical presence of parents does not create strong emotional bonds. Emotional neglect causes adolescents to lose a stable affection figure, so they tend to seek substitutes for a sense of security and acceptance outside the home. Peer groups take over the family's role as an alternative socialization

agent, providing a sense of belonging and recognition. In the context of this research, the absence of emotional attachment within the family weakens the internalization of conventional values and blurs the boundaries between acceptable and deviant behavior. Peer groups then take over the family's role as an alternative primitive socialization agent, providing a sense of belonging, recognition, and emotional protection that is felt to be more real by adolescents.

### Structural Gaps in the Residential Environment

In addition to the family, the residential environment also shows failure in providing positive socialization spaces. The absence of youth organization activities, sports activities, or youth programs creates unstructured free time with minimal social supervision (Yohanis, 2023). In Durkheim's framework, this condition reflects the weak function of informal social institutions in building positive solidarity. The void of social activities at the community level has the potential to create an "empty social space" that is vulnerable to being filled by deviant subcultures (Yohanis, 2023). The gangster groups in this research exploit this gap by providing routine activities, gathering places (basecamps), and collective identity that gives meaning to adolescent life.

Youth involvement is also influenced by the void of social activities in the residential environment. Informant ES, who is an additional informant and the older sibling of informant TR, explained:

*"... Apart from the family environment, another factor is the absence of group activities such as youth organizations to create positive activities like community service or competitions that can serve as activities for adolescents in that area"* Informant ES, 2025.

The statement from informant ES explains that the absence of youth organization activities or other youth initiatives that engage adolescents in positive activities from an early age creates gaps of unstructured free time. As a result, because they are not accustomed to activities in their residential environment, these adolescents tend to seek gathering places in other environments, usually at friends' residences that are considered more crowded, interesting, and 'lively'. These findings indicate that the absence of positive social activities in the surrounding

environment becomes a structural gap that encourages youth involvement in uncontrolled groups, where they can find activities that are enjoyable for themselves, regardless of their criminal nature.

### **Mechanical Solidarity as Group Bonding**

Mechanical solidarity is a concept of similarity between individuals in various aspects, because for them this represents shared feelings and strong emotional bonds that cause the emergence of similar emotional feelings (Fathoni, 2024). In this case, gangster groups are built through age similarity, intense and repeated interactions in daily life. The basecamp is not merely a gathering place, but rather the main social space where trust, loyalty, and group norms are produced and reproduced. The belief that the basecamp "will never be empty" shows that the group has absolute priority in the structure of adolescent life. Interactions that occur almost every day create a high level of social integration, where the presence of members is considered natural and does not need to be questioned. In line with the research, high meeting intensity accelerates the process of internalizing group norms and strengthens conformity pressure.

Relations based on emotional closeness also create behavioral interdependence where individual actions are almost always aligned with the group's will. In this situation, conformity is not merely an external demand, but a psychosocial need to maintain status as an accepted member. Acting in accordance with group norms becomes very strong, because the sense of being acknowledged and accepted is an urgent social need that has failed to be fulfilled by the family. Research informants have high trust in their group; when their group engages in brawling actions, other members will support that action as a form of inter-group solidarity that must be maintained. The definition of a "second home" is the meaning they find in that group. If one member is disturbed by another group, other members will not accept that treatment, and such cases will create brawling actions between groups.

In Durkheim's perspective, this condition shows the dominance of collective consciousness that suppresses individual autonomy. Members' actions are almost always aligned with the group's interests, so personal decisions lose their

significance. Solidarity is not only emotional but also normative, where allegiance to the group becomes a moral obligation.

### **Delinquent Collective Consciousness and Repressive Law**

Law is a form of collective anger that stems from deviation or violation of collective consciousness within a group. Mechanical solidarity is a manifestation of social facts which, according to Durkheim, constitute a social environment that possesses social solidarity (Andari, 2013). Solidarity itself is not merely a form of positive belief similarity but can also take negative forms. Strong mechanical solidarity gives birth to delinquent collective consciousness that views violence as a mechanism for protecting group honor. The gang honor principle requires that every threat against one member be retaliated collectively. In this context, violence is not represented as a violation of norms, but rather as a legitimate action to maintain group integrity.

*"...Our group never starts trouble with other groups, but if our group is disturbed, we will retaliate. This is because our purpose in gathering is just to hang out, so as men, if we don't look for trouble, we shouldn't be afraid of fights"* Informants RB and MF, 2025.

The explanation from informants RB and MF explains that there is a strong bond and sense of solidarity among members that causes them to not allow anyone to disturb their group, because if this happens, not only will the disturbed member retaliate, but other group members will also join in retaliating. Research informant RB was once a victim of a gangster group attack and as a result, he received a fairly long slash wound on his calf.

**Figure 2. Scar From Slashing Incident Against Informant RB**



Source: Reserch, 2025

In that photo, RB received a sharp weapon injury from gangster perpetrators who carried out random attacks at night at 02.00 WIB in 2024. At that time, RB was on a motorcycle with his friends when, without warning, a group of gangsters who were also riding motorcycles swung their sharp weapons toward RB's leg. The next form of solidarity possessed by the group occurred when RB was treated at the hospital due to that injury. MF, who is his close friend, helped RB's parents, who did not have a vehicle, by taking his parents from home to the hospital. Because of this, RB felt that the solidarity provided by his group was very real.

This incident reflects the functioning of repressive law as explained by Durkheim, where social sanctions are swift and collective. Individuals experience deindividuation, so personal responsibility weakens and courage increases when acting together with the group. This finding confirms that youth delinquency is more a product of collective dynamics than individual impulses alone.

Being in a group has been proven to significantly increase adolescents' sense of courage compared to when they act alone. This finding is supported by the fact that criminal acts and high-risk behaviors are almost always carried out collectively. Individual fear tends to be covered by collective support and courage when they take action together with their group. Informants AK and TY's group, for example,

once made threats using sharp weapons against individuals, and these activities were carried out together. An interesting finding is that when one individual group member faces a threat from outside parties, retaliation will be carried out collectively. This is done because members feel that a threat to one individual is a threat to the entire group, which can lead to larger inter-group fights. This finding illustrates that adolescent courage is situational and highly influenced by group support.

One key finding is the absence of regret or fear expressed by informants after committing criminal acts, as in the following direct quote:

*“...After committing criminal acts, there is no feeling of regret or fear afterward.”*  
informant TR, 2025.

This response is described as a strong sense of self-satisfaction. This satisfaction is not merely an ordinary sensation, but rather self-esteem reinforcement that is closely related to the social construction of Hegemonic Masculinity. This construction places courage, the inability to show fear, and the ability to face risks as symbols of ideal male strength. Hegemonic masculinity can be seen from the definition and knowledge held in the form of violence that is considered as proof (Harahap et al., 2024). This is evidenced by the actions taken by research informants with the strength and control that must be possessed, which in this concept becomes the ideal norm of the group. In other words, criminal acts committed are not only based on aggressive impulses, but as a way to establish self-identity before the group and oneself. This action functions as proof that they are able to face risks and threats without fear. This courage is not only a personal aspect, but the result of internalization of social norms that encourage adolescents to demonstrate strong male identity through real actions, including deviant behavior.

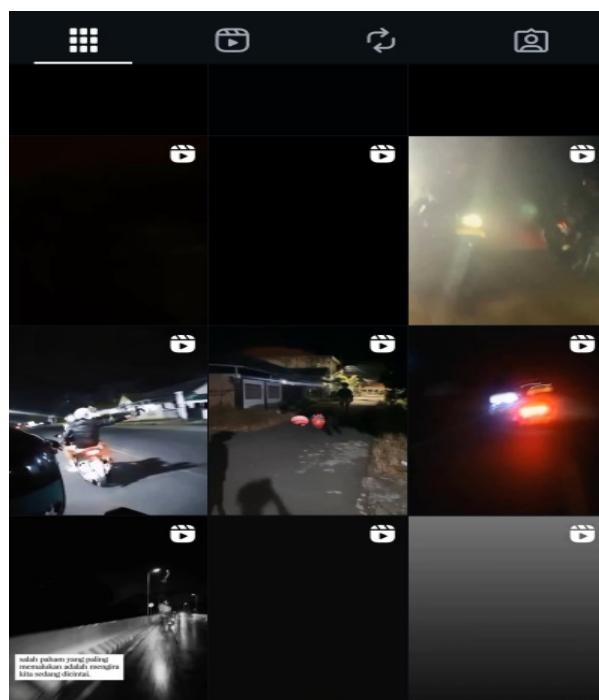
### **Social Media as an Arena for Value Normalization**

Groups currently use social media accounts as a means to build, validate, and legitimize group existence (Nugraeni & Nugraeni, 2024). Social media plays an important role in strengthening delinquent collective consciousness. Group social media accounts function not only as a means of existence, but also as a symbolic

space to display courage, solidarity, and power. Uploads of sharp weapon photos, brawl videos, and gathering activities create visual normalization of deviant behavior.

Social media is highly influential in shaping adolescents' perceptions, identity, and interest in gangster groups. Social media provides visual content that promotes the group's image, including photos of sharp weapons, brawl videos, and activities that demonstrate their existence and strength. This content not only serves as a source of information but also as a means of forming norms and identity that are then internalized by adolescents. The existence of group social media accounts in Bengkulu functions as a mirror of group existence and a platform that strengthens solidarity, while simultaneously promoting an image of strength and courage. Social media becomes a medium that accelerates the spread of criminal group influence and the normalization of deviant behavior.

**Figure 2. Video Posts of Group Activities**



Source: KD Group's Instagram Social Media

In Figure 2, it is explained that the group carried out actions in the form of brawls, use of sharp weapons, and other criminal activities that were uploaded to the group's social media account as a form of group identity as well as a container

for storing memories in the form of actions that the group had carried out. These uploads contain videos of adolescents conducting convoys using motorcycles and not forgetting to use sharp weapons in these actions. The video also explains that they were swinging these sharp weapons. Another video that can be described is a brawl action carried out using long samurai swords by each individual.

Observations of social media uploads (Instagram) from these adolescent groups, which contain photos of gathering activities, use of sharp weapons, brawl action videos, convoys, and threatening videos, explicitly show that this group operates as a criminal group. The influence of social media is clearly visible, especially considering the prevalence of gangster cases in Bengkulu City in 2024, where many social media accounts were found to be oriented toward criminal groups, creating the impression as if adolescents were driven by the need to not be left behind by the trend of activities that were occurring.

### **Limits of Solidarity and Adaptation to Formal Control**

An important finding of this research is the group's decision to cease criminal activities in 2025 without disbanding the group entirely. Pressure from formal social control, particularly the increased legal risks due to numerous cases, prompted the group to make strategic adaptations. Mechanical solidarity did not disappear, but was redirected to non-criminal activities such as gathering and playing.

The decision made by the KD group to declare themselves "on hiatus" from criminal activities in 2025 is a crucial sociological phenomenon indicating that Delinquent Mechanical Solidarity has limits of compliance that are not absolute. The gangster group solidarity that had been so strong in driving collective action and triggering Repressive Law (gang honor) ultimately had to submit to far greater counterpressure originating from Formal Social Control, namely the law enforcement system.

*"...In 2024, we often engaged in brawls on the basis of not wanting to be disturbed, but now we do not carry out such actions due to each person's busyness after graduating from school. However, we still gather and hang out, but not as intensely as before when we could gather from morning until the next morning to play games, cards, or PlayStation (PS)"*  
Informant RB, 2025.

*"...The group was formed in 2024 with many cases committed. For 2025, we no longer engage in those criminal activities because we have experienced many cases that caused us to be monitored by the police. However, even though we are not engaging in criminal activities again, we still gather together. This is because of the sense of togetherness that has been built as a group."* Informant AK, 2025.

The statements from informants RB and AK explain that although the activities they once engaged in were deviant activities and criminal behavior, for a group that has gone through difficult and happy times together, they will not leave the group because they still have a sense of togetherness and high solidarity, where from the beginning of the group's formation they have considered the group as a home or part of themselves.

However, the most interesting and sociologically significant aspect is that the cessation of criminal activities was not accompanied by total group dissolution. Social cohesion, which is the core value most precious to adolescents, was maintained. The adolescents strategically chose to stop the manifestation of Repressive Law (such as brawls and threats), but maintained Solidarity in the form of safer activities, such as gathering and playing.

This shows that criminality is not the main purpose of the group's existence, but rather a means to affirm social cohesion. Criminality often functions as a tool or ritual to affirm solidarity and status, not as an end goal. Therefore, Mechanical Solidarity continues to exist, but undergoes adaptation in form in order to survive under the pressure of formal social control. This shift demonstrates strategic flexibility to ensure the survival of the social bonds they have built, proving that their Mechanical Solidarity bonds are strong enough to drive criminal action, but also adaptive enough to release criminality in order to save their basic social bonds.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Based on the sociological criminological analysis of the emergence of adolescent gangster groups in Bengkulu City, this research draws several main conclusions regarding the dynamics of Mechanical Solidarity, causative factors, and group adaptation to social control. The involvement of adolescents in gangster groups in Bengkulu City in 2024 is confirmed as a stable and recurring collective delinquency phenomenon, supported by the mechanism of Mechanical Solidarity

(Émile Durkheim). This solidarity is formed from age similarity (15–18 years), shared experiences, and intense interaction patterns, such as the habit of gathering daily at the basecamp without appointments, based on absolute trust among members. This solidarity produces a dominant Delinquent Collective Consciousness, where values such as courage, gang honor, and solidarity become the group's moral compass.

The dominance of this Delinquent Mechanical Solidarity is made possible by the weakening of conventional social bonds at the micro level. Most informants experienced emotional neglect, either due to broken homes or limited emotional interaction with parents due to work commitments. This condition weakens the internalization of conventional values, forcing adolescents to seek more tangible replacement solidarity, namely peer/gangster groups, as alternative primary socialization agents. The absence of positive social activities, such as youth organizations or youth programs, creates structural gaps in the residential environment. This empty social space is exploited by gangster groups to build a base of Mechanical Solidarity, providing identity and "lively" activities for adolescents.

Mechanical Solidarity is manifested in criminal actions through the mechanism of Repressive Law. The defense of group honor (gang honor) and collective retaliation against threats are manifestations of Durkheim's Repressive Law. An attack on one individual is considered an attack on the entire Collective Consciousness, which demands swift retaliation to reassert group integrity and solidarity. This strong solidarity bond triggers deindividuation, where personal responsibility decreases and courage increases significantly. Criminal and high-risk actions (brawls, use of sharp weapons) are carried out collectively, driven by group norms. Social Media, Social media functions as a collective ritual and arena for value normalization. Visual uploads regarding delinquent actions strengthen solidarity and project an image of courage that becomes an integral part of group identity.

The KD group's decision to go "on hiatus" from criminal activities because "there have been too many cases" shows that pressure from Formal Social Control (law enforcement authorities) successfully counterbalanced the impulse of delinquent Collective Consciousness. Most importantly, this hiatus was not accompanied by group dissolution. Solidarity was maintained in the form of safer

activities (gathering and playing). This concludes that for adolescents, the value of social cohesion and emotional bonds is more fundamental than criminal behavior itself. Mechanical Solidarity underwent adaptation in form to ensure the survival of social bonds under greater formal control pressure. Overall, this research concludes that the gangster phenomenon in Bengkulu is a structural response to the weakness of conventional social bonds, which allows Delinquent Mechanical Solidarity to flourish and become an alternative home for adolescents.

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