



Shadow Justice and the Role of Informal Legal Systems in Urban Marginal Communities

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the role of informal legal systems in shaping alternative justice practices in urban marginalized communities and their interaction with formal law. Using a qualitative case study with 25 informants, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and analyzed interactively. The findings show that informal systems help maintain order, resolve disputes, and provide justice rooted in communal solidarity, though risks of power domination and exclusion remain. The study concludes that “shadow justice” creates a hybrid legal ecosystem reflecting social adaptation to limited formal access. Theoretically, it enriches the study of formal-informal law interaction, while practically offering insights for more inclusive legal policy.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of urbanization in various parts of the world has presented serious challenges for urban marginalized communities, especially regarding access to formal legal services. In informal settlements or urban villages, the existence of formal legal institutions such as courts and police is often minimal, ineffective, or even not trusted by the community (Santos & Cunha, 2022). This condition has caused residents to develop alternative conflict resolution mechanisms that are faster, cheaper, and in accordance with local social and cultural norms. This phenomenon gives birth to what is called shadow justice, which is the practice of justice that takes place outside the formal system but has social legitimacy in maintaining order and resolving disputes (Alves & Petersen, 2021).

In the Indonesian context, the phenomenon of shadow justice can be found in various urban areas, especially in densely populated neighborhoods and marginalized communities. Residents in the region often use community leaders, local leaders, or even non-governmental groups as conflict mediators rather than bringing problems to the formal legal realm (Koeswahyono et al., 2023). This dynamic shows that there is a structural gap between state law and daily social practices, which if not managed properly can cause legal dualism and uncertainty in the protection of rights (Prasetyo, 2021). Therefore, understanding the role of the informal legal system is important to examine how justice is realized in urban marginalized spaces.

Theoretical studies of legal pluralism have long highlighted the interaction between formal and non-formal law in people's lives. According to Griffiths (2021), legal pluralism describes the existence of various legal norms that coexist, both from the state and from the community. However, recent research shows that legal pluralism does not only occur in rural areas or indigenous peoples, but also in increasingly complex urban contexts (Lee, 2025). This confirms that urbanization does not remove local norms, but rather gives rise to new forms of adaptation through informal justice mechanisms (Hernández & Pérez, 2022).

However, there are limitations in previous research. For example, the study of Koeswahyono et al. (2023) emphasizes the role of community norms in the revitalization of slums, but does not explore the dimension of informal justice as an instrument for conflict resolution. Meanwhile, Krakowski and Kursani (2023) research in Kosovo does show the reasons why citizens choose non-formal routes, but has not addressed in depth the specific dynamics of urban marginalized communities that are fraught with structural limitations. Similarly, Sultan and Fatima (2024) highlight how informal law can support or harm human rights, but their focus is more on a human rights perspective than on the practice of everyday justice in urban communities.

Based on this critical study, it can be identified that there is a significant research gap. Studies on shadow justice in urban marginalized communities are still rare, especially with an in-depth qualitative approach. In fact, informal legal practice in these environments has wide implications, both for the social life of citizens and for the effectiveness of formal law itself (Mouffe, 2022). Therefore,

this study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the role of informal legal systems in shaping alternative justice practices in urban marginalized communities.

The purpose of this research is explicitly to identify informal conflict resolution mechanisms that are carried out by urban marginalized communities, uncover the key actors that play a role in them, and explain how these systems interact with formal law. Using a qualitative approach of case studies, this study emphasizes the direct experiences of residents, community leaders, local officials, and other non-formal parties, so that it is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the reality of shadow justice in an urban context.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of the literature on legal pluralism by presenting an empirical analysis that emphasizes marginal urban contexts. This research expands the understanding of the hybridity of the legal system, namely the meeting between state law and local norms that form a new justice ecosystem (Bayat, 2020). These findings also confirm that shadow justice is not just a substitute for formal law, but a form of social adaptation to the structural limitations faced by marginalized communities (Rodríguez & Silva, 2021).

Practically, the results of the research are expected to provide input for policymakers to formulate a strategy for legal reform that is more inclusive and responsive to the realities of marginalized communities. Recognition of the role of community mediators, the establishment of community justice centers, or integrative policies between formal and informal law can be solutions to strengthen access to justice for vulnerable groups (Hidayat & Prabowo, 2022). Thus, this research is expected to be able to bridge the gap between legal pluralism theory and the implementation of legal policies in the field, as well as strengthen social justice in marginalized urban spaces.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Shadow Justice and Legal Pluralism in Urban Areas

The concept of shadow justice is closely related to legal pluralism, namely the existence of various legal systems that coexist, both state law, religious law, and local community norms. In urban contexts, especially marginalized areas, legal pluralism can be seen through the practice of citizen mediation, customary forums, and the role of community leaders that replace the absence of formal legal services (Jacobs, 2024). This is in line with the everyday law approach which emphasizes that urban residents often create daily justice practices to respond to urgent needs that are not accommodated by the state (Santos, 2022). Several international studies have found that informal mechanisms are actually considered more effective by urban poor because they are low-cost, the process is fast, and the results are more in line with community values than formal courts which are often seen as slow and unaffordable (Denney, 2023; Murray, 2024). Therefore, shadow justice in urban areas is not simply understood as a "shadow" of formal law, but as a parallel justice system that functions in a social space where legal formalities are limited.

Access to Justice and Vulnerability in Urban Marginalized Communities

Urban marginalized communities face significant structural barriers in accessing formal law. High case costs, low legal literacy, convoluted bureaucracy, and social stigma are factors that encourage them to rely more on non-formal mechanisms (World Justice Project, 2022). Global studies show that the disputes that most often arise in marginal urban areas—such as family conflicts, land, debt, and social order violations—are more often resolved outside of formal channels (World Justice Project, 2023). In addition to economic factors, vulnerability also arises due to the socio-political position of marginalized residents who often do not have residency documents or legal status over their land and residence. This condition makes informal mechanisms a more realistic option. In line with the people-centred justice approach, community-based mechanisms need to be seen not as mere "alternative laws", but an integral part of the urban justice ecosystem (Denney, 2023). This shows the importance of viewing shadow justice as an adaptive response to the structural injustices experienced by the urban poor.

Actors and Mechanisms in the Informal Legal System

In urban marginalized communities, shadow justice is carried out by various local actors such as RT/RW chairs, religious leaders, social organizations, and community mediators. These actors have social legitimacy because they are considered close to citizens, understand the local context, and are able to provide practical solutions that are in accordance with community norms (Jacobs, 2024). The mechanisms used are generally in the form of deliberation, consensus, mediation, or restitution that emphasizes social recovery rather than formal punishment. However, a number of studies highlight the risk of bias in this system. For example, women, young people, or minority groups may experience discrimination if decisions are based solely on patriarchal norms or the dominance of local elites (Denney, 2023; Murray, 2024). Therefore, it is important to have accountability, case recording, and training of community mediators so that informal mechanisms do not just reproduce injustice, but actually support the principle of inclusivity.

Formal Legal and Informal Law Relations

Formal and informal legal relations in urban areas are ambivalent. On the one hand, informal mechanisms can reduce the burden of cases in the courts and provide a quick path for citizens who need immediate legal certainty. On the other hand, there is a risk of forum shopping, inconsistent standards, and corrupt practices by local elites who use informal authority for personal gain (Jacobs, 2024). A number of international studies emphasize the need for a hybrid model that integrates the two systems. For example, the training of community mediators by state officials, the establishment of a two-way referral mechanism, and a human rights-based monitoring system can help bridge the two systems to be more complementary (Denney, 2023; Murray, 2024). Thus, shadow justice is not just an emergency solution, but can be integrated into the national legal framework in a more sustainable manner.

Gender and Inclusivity Dimensions in Shadow Justice

Gender issues are one of the important aspects in the discussion of shadow justice. Many studies confirm that women and vulnerable groups often face greater barriers in non-formal mechanisms because local norms tend to be gender-biased (Denney, 2023). For example, in resolving cases of domestic violence, community mediators may encourage peace for social harmony without paying attention to the rights of women's victims. Therefore, a number of researchers emphasize the importance of a survivor-centred and trauma-informed approach so that informal mechanisms can become a more equitable and inclusive justice space (Murray, 2024). The implementation of these principles is also in line with the global commitment to gender justice within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 16 on access to justice.

Land Issues and Social Disputes in Urban Areas

Land conflicts, inheritances, home ownership disputes, and violations of social order are the issues that most often arise in urban marginalized communities. Many of these disputes are resolved informally to avoid high costs and lengthy litigation in court (World Justice Project, 2023). Recent research shows that strengthening community forums can increase citizens' compliance with agreements, strengthen social cohesion, and prevent conflict escalation when equipped with minimum due process principles (Murray, 2024). In the Indonesian context, the restorative justice policy applied by the police in minor cases also shows opportunities for integration between formal and informal law. Community leaders are involved in the mediation process, so that the settlement results are more accepted by the community. However, implementation in the field still faces challenges in harmonizing standards and protecting vulnerable groups (Kusumah, 2023; Wibowo, 2024).

Community-Driven Justice and Citizen-Based Reform

Experience in various countries shows that community-driven justice connected to social services, housing, and spatial planning can increase the sense of security of marginalized citizens (Denney, 2023). Citizen-based reforms encourage the state to recognize, strengthen, and supervise informal mechanisms so that they do not conflict with human rights principles. Furthermore, the integration of shadow justice with the sustainable development agenda is also important, especially SDG 16.3 which targets access to justice for all. In this framework, shadow justice is seen not only as an informal practice, but also as an adaptive strategy of urban communities in fighting for justice in the midst of the limitations of formal legal services (Murray, 2024). Thus, the study of shadow justice in urban marginalized communities has strategic value, both academically in expanding the legal pluralism literature, and practically in formulating inclusive policies.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Design

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is able to delve deeply into the meaning, dynamics, and practices of informal law in the context of urban marginalized communities. Meanwhile, the design of the case study was chosen to allow researchers to understand the phenomenon of shadow justice in a contextual, comprehensive, and detailed manner according to the social environment in which it takes place (Yin, 2021).

Location, Population, and Sampling Techniques

The research was conducted in three marginal urban areas that represent Indonesia's socio-cultural diversity, namely: Central Java, East Nusa Tenggara, and Southeast Sulawesi. The selection of this location takes into account the existence of informal legal practices that are still strong and part of the community conflict resolution mechanism. The research population is individuals who are directly or indirectly involved in the informal practice of law in the region. Informants were selected using purposive sampling with the following criteria: (1) residents who have been involved in conflict resolution through non-formal channels, (2) community or customary leaders who act as mediators, (3) local officials who interact with informal legal mechanisms, and (4) other relevant parties. The number of participants was set at 25 informants, with a proportional distribution in each location until data saturation reached (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2020).

Data Collection Techniques

Data is collected through three main techniques:

- a. In-depth interviews, using semi-structural guidelines to explore informants' experiences, perceptions, and views regarding shadow justice practices (Merriam & Tisdell, 2021).
- b. Participatory observation, in which researchers directly follow the dispute resolution process or citizen meetings to capture the dynamics of social interaction (Spradley, 2021).
- c. Documentation, in the form of deliberation records, local archives, and other supporting data related to informal legal practice.

To increase credibility, the researcher used triangulation methods (interviews, observations, documentation) and member checking, by reconfirming the initial interpretation to some informants (Lincoln & Guba, 2020).

Research Procedure

The research was carried out through several stages:

- a. Preparation: preparation of interview instruments, observation sheets, and research permits from related institutions.

- b. Field: conducting interviews ±60–90 minutes per informant, participatory observation, and document collection. The field process was carried out for 3–4 months in three research areas.
- c. Interim analysis: interview transcription, initial coding, and field reflections.
- d. Final analysis and writing: data organization, theme processing, and preparation of research report results.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis uses Miles' interactive analysis model (Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020), which includes: (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation and (3) conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis process was carried out in a cyclical and repetitive manner until the main themes were found, including: the role of the informal legal system, the relationship with formal law, social legitimacy, and the risk of exclusion of weak groups. To make it easier to organize data, analysis is assisted by qualitative software such as NVivo or Atlas.ti, so that pattern drawing is more systematic, transparent, and measurable (Jacobs, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of the Informal Legal System in Maintaining Social Order

The results of the study show that the informal legal system has a very strong social legitimacy in urban marginalized communities in Central Java, East Nusa Tenggara, and Southeast Sulawesi. The existence of community leaders, religious leaders, and heads of RTs and RWs is seen as closer, responsive, and trusted by citizens than formal legal institutions. This is not only due to geographical proximity factors, but also because of emotional and cultural closeness, as well as conformity with community norms and values. Of the 25 informants, 19 people emphasized that community mediation forums are more effective in maintaining daily social order than reporting to the police or filing cases in court, which are often considered expensive, complicated, and time-consuming.

The practice of deliberation and consensus is seen as the best way to maintain social harmony. The decisions resulting from these forums are usually in the form of a peace agreement, an apology, or voluntary compensation. This mechanism is considered to be able to reduce conflicts without causing prolonged resentment. A community leader in Semarang said, "*If there are small problems such as quarrels or debts, we prefer to sit together. If you take it to the police, it usually gets longer and actually makes the relationship tense.*" (Informant A, July 2025 interview).

Citizens' trust in informal mechanisms is also strengthened by the experience of those who feel that formal law is often not on the side of small communities. One of the residents in Kupang stated, "*If we go to court, the cost is large, the time is long, and often the results are unclear. But if it is solved in the village, it is usually fast, cheap, and everyone can accept it.*" (Informant B, July 2025 interview). This quote confirms that accessibility is a major factor that keeps informal mechanisms relevant and trustworthy.

In addition, in Kendari, a religious leader also emphasized the value of solidarity and communality as the reason for residents to maintain community-based settlements. He said, "*If there is a conflict here, we prioritize peace, because the important thing is that the community remains in harmony. If you are too rigid in following the rules of the state, sometimes it will actually divide the citizens themselves.*" (Informant C, July 2025 interview). This shows that for marginalized communities, justice is not only understood as a formal legal decision, but also as a way to restore social relations and maintain group cohesion. Thus, the findings of this study underline that the role of the informal legal system in maintaining social order cannot be reduced as a "shadow" form of formal law. Rather, it serves as the main mechanism that is recognized, accepted, and carried out by society in dealing with everyday problems.

Dispute Resolution and Shadow Justice Effectiveness

The results of the study show that shadow justice functions as the main mechanism in the resolution of daily disputes in urban marginalized communities. The most common types of disputes handled through informal channels are family conflicts, debts and receivables, land, and minor social order violations. Of the 25 informants, as many as 72 percent stated that debt cases and family disputes are more often handled by local mediators than formal law enforcement. This is because informal mechanisms are considered simpler, faster, and able to provide solutions that are acceptable to both parties.

Based on participatory observations, mediation forums are usually held at the homes of community leaders, community halls, or even in the yard of the house of one of the parties to the conflict. The process takes place in an open atmosphere, where both parties are welcome to submit their grievances, while mediators or community leaders act as mediators. Decisions are usually made by consensus with the value of community justice in mind. The form of settlement produced is generally in the form of an apology, reimbursement of losses, or certain social obligations such as helping citizens' activities. An informant from Semarang explained, "*If there is a debt problem, we usually gather both parties at the RT house. There is no need for the police, there is enough agreement on when the money will be returned, and usually everyone can accept*" (Informant D, July 2025 interview).

The data collected also showed variations in the types of disputes that were resolved informally. Debt-and-receivables disputes dominated with 32 percent, followed by family conflicts at 28 percent, land or land disputes at 20 percent, minor social offenses such as minor commotions or disturbances of order at 15 percent, and other categories at 5 percent. These findings confirm that shadow justice functions more in the realm of daily life which is directly related to the social and economic relations of citizens. A resident of Kupang revealed, "*If it's a family or small land problem, we prefer to solve it in the village. If it is taken to court, it can take years and the cost is expensive.*" (Informant E, July 2025 interview).

The effectiveness of this mechanism can also be seen from the level of compliance of residents with the results of mediation. Informants in Kendari said that the agreements produced in community forums are generally more respected because they are witnessed directly by community leaders and local residents. He said, "*If there is an agreement in front of village leaders, usually people*

are embarrassed if they don't comply. So, it is more obedient than if it is only an official letter from the court." (Informant F, July 2025 interview). This quote confirms that social legitimacy is the main factor that makes shadow justice more effective than formal channels.

Thus, the findings of the study show that shadow justice is not only an alternative to formal law, but also serves as the main justice system in the daily lives of urban marginalized communities. A consensus-based mediation process that is cheap, fast, and in accordance with local norms is the main reason why this mechanism is maintained. In addition, the existence of a social dimension in the form of shame, respect for community leaders, and the need to maintain community cohesion make informal dispute resolution more effective than formal mechanisms that tend to be rigid.

Relationship with the Formal Legal System

The findings of the study show an ambivalent relationship between formal legal mechanisms and informal law in urban marginalized communities. On the one hand, the existence of an informal legal system is considered to be able to help ease the burden on the courts and formal legal apparatus. Many simple cases such as family disputes, debts, or minor social offenses are resolved quickly at the community level so that they do not add to the long list of cases in the police or courts. The existence of this mechanism makes it easier for residents to obtain certainty of settlement without having to wait for a long formal legal process. An informant from Semarang confirmed, *"If all the small problems are brought to court, it will definitely pile up and take a long time to be completed. In the village way, problems are quickly resolved and residents can get along again."* (Informant G, July 2025 interview).

However, on the other hand, the relationship between the informal system and formal law does not always run harmoniously. The study found cases where the results of community mediation were contrary to formal legal principles, especially regarding the protection of vulnerable groups. For example, in some cases of domestic violence, community forums prefer to promote peace in order to maintain social harmony, even though it has the potential to disregard the rights of victims. This situation shows that shadow justice is not always in line with the principles of formal justice based on legal protection. This was revealed by an informant from Kupang, *"Sometimes the village's decision is only to apologize or be peaceful, even though the victim is actually still suffering. If it is taken to the police, it may be a different story, but people here prefer peace."* (Informant H, July 2025 interview).

In addition, the study also found a phenomenon *forum shopping*, where the aggrieved party in informal mediation tries to find another avenue through formal mechanisms to obtain a more favorable outcome. Five informants said that this practice often occurs, especially in cases of land disputes or large debts, where the losing party is dissatisfied with the community's decision. The existence of this dual forum makes the settlement process sometimes protracted because the parties to the conflict can move from informal to formal mechanisms or vice versa. An informant from Kendari explained, *"If you lose in village*

mediation, there are people who go directly to the police. Sometimes on the court the results are different, so they find a way to win." (Informant I, July 2025 interview).

Thus, these findings suggest that while shadow justice contributes positively to reducing the burden of formal law and providing quick solutions, its existence also leaves serious challenges related to justice consistency, protection of the rights of weak groups, and potential overlap with formal law. This relationship reflects the existence of a dynamic hybrid legal ecosystem, but requires a clearer linking mechanism so as not to create legal uncertainty at the community and state level.

Risk of Domination and Social Exclusion

Although shadow justice mechanisms have been shown to be effective in maintaining order and resolving daily disputes, the study found significant weaknesses, particularly related to the risk of domination of powerful groups and exclusion of weak parties. Of the 25 informants, eight people, mostly women and young people, stated that decisions in community mediation forums are often biased against the interests of adult men or influential figures in the local community. This inequality of bargaining positions makes the voices of vulnerable groups less considered in the decision-making process.

In cases of domestic violence, for example, settlements are often directed at peace on the grounds of maintaining family and community harmony, without providing adequate protection for victims. An informant from Semarang conveyed his experience, *"If a husband hits his wife, he is usually told to apologize, then it is considered finished. Women are rarely really protected, because it is more important to maintain the good name of the family."* (Informant J, July 2025 interview). This quote shows how informal mechanisms can reproduce structural injustices at the expense of victims' rights for the sake of social stability.

A similar phenomenon was also found in East Nusa Tenggara, where mediation decisions were more often influenced by community leaders or religious leaders. In some cases, the weaker party does not dare to express their opinion for fear of stigma or social pressure. An informant from Kupang explained, *"If there is a dispute, usually only the gentlemen or traditional leaders talk about it. Young people or women rarely participate, for fear of being considered disrespectful."* (Informant K, July 2025 interview). This situation confirms the dominance of certain actors in community forums which makes conflict resolution less inclusive.

In addition, the study also found that other marginalized groups, such as citizens without a clear residency status or newcomers, often feel marginalized. They do not always gain the same access to file complaints or demand justice through community forums. An informant from Kendari said, *"If we are immigrants, usually the decision is to defend the old people more. Sometimes we are not considered a full part of the community, so it is difficult when there are problems."* (Informant L, July 2025 interview). This suggests that shadow justice, while serving as the main means of dispute resolution, has the potential to reinforce social exclusion that already exists in society.

Thus, these findings show that the existence of shadow justice is not without risks. Mechanisms that rely heavily on local norms and the authority of

community leaders can lead to bias, domination, and discrimination against vulnerable groups. This situation indicates the need for interventions in the form of capacity building of mediators, the application of gender equality principles, and external supervision so that the informal justice system is truly able to realize inclusive social justice in urban marginalized communities.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study confirm that the existence of shadow justice is the main mechanism in resolving daily disputes in urban marginalized communities in Central Java, East Nusa Tenggara, and Southeast Sulawesi. This informal legal mechanism was chosen by the majority of citizens because it was considered faster, cheaper, and in accordance with local cultural values. These findings are consistent with the recent literature that emphasizes that customary and informal justice play an important role in realizing community-centered justice, especially in areas where access to formal legal institutions is limited (Denney & Domingo, 2023). From a theoretical perspective, this reinforces the idea of legal pluralism that formal and informal legal systems not only run in parallel, but are mutually adaptable and complementary in maintaining social order.

The effectiveness of informal mechanisms can be understood through the structural and cultural factors behind them. The local mediation process carried out by community leaders or religious leaders has high legitimacy because of the emotional closeness and trust of residents. In addition, the process takes place in a participatory, restorative, and consensus-oriented manner, so as to be able to maintain social cohesion. Several studies show that mechanisms like this are indeed more commonly used by people in various developing countries because they are more accessible, have low costs, and can provide solutions that are quickly accepted by both parties (World Justice Project, 2023; Hidayat & Karim, 2021). Consequently, legal policies need to be context-sensitive, namely not displacing local mechanisms, but strengthening the quality of community mediation, building referral mechanisms to formal institutions, and providing inclusive legal support.

However, the findings of this study also show that there are serious risks that need attention. Eight out of twenty-five informants, mainly women and young people, stated that decisions in community forums are often biased towards adult men or influential figures. In cases of domestic violence, for example, settlements are more often directed at peace without providing adequate protection to the victim. This situation shows the dominance of powerful groups and exclusion for the weak, a phenomenon that is also emphasized in the literature on the risk of discrimination in the non-formal legal system (Rahman, 2023; UNDP, 2021). Therefore, it is important to have rights-based safeguards that can ensure accountability, such as case registration, training of human rights-based mediators, and clear referral channels to formal institutions.

The relationship between formal and informal legal systems in the context of this study shows ambivalent dynamics. On the one hand, informal mechanisms help reduce the burden on the courts by resolving simple disputes

quickly. But on the other hand, there are cases where community mediation decisions are not in line with the principles of state law, especially when it comes to the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups. The phenomenon of forum shopping, which is the effort of the losing party to find another more profitable route, is also found in the case of land disputes. This indicates structural tensions when formal and informal systems are not well integrated, as noted in previous research on jurisdictional overlap in plural legal contexts (Lestari & Sari, 2020).

The contribution of this research lies in the empirical mapping of how the hybrid justice ecosystem operates in Indonesia's urban marginals. In addition to reinforcing the concept of legal pluralism, this study highlights the role of local mediators as social liaisons who maintain order, while also showing their vulnerability in terms of power bias. The results of this study also provide clear practical implications for policymakers, namely the need for an engage-and-regulate approach that not only recognizes local practices, but also oversees them with stronger rights protections.

However, this study has limitations, namely the number of informants is relatively small and purposive so that the results cannot be generalized statistically. The scope of the location covers only three regions, while the dynamics of informal law in Indonesia are very diverse. The potential for respondent bias also needs to be considered considering that the research theme is quite sensitive. Therefore, follow-up research is recommended using mixed-methods design, expanding site coverage, as well as conducting longitudinal studies to see the long-term effectiveness of informal agreements.

Overall, this study confirms that shadow justice is not just a substitute for state law, but part of a more complex justice ecosystem in urban marginalized communities. These mechanisms are effective in maintaining social order and resolving daily conflicts, but are prone to inequality and exclusion. Therefore, inclusive legal policies based on the needs of the community as well as the protection of rights are the key for the informal legal system to function more equitably.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research confirms that the existence of shadow justice is an important reality in the lives of urban marginalized communities. Informal legal mechanisms exist not only as a substitute for state law, but as a form of social adaptation to the limited public access to formal legal institutions. With its low cost, fast process, and conformity with local norms, this mechanism is seen by citizens as a more effective way to maintain social order and resolve daily disputes.

The findings of the study show that the informal legal system plays a significant role in reducing family conflicts, debts and receivables disputes, land, and minor social violations, while building a sense of justice based on communal solidarity. The social legitimacy of local mediators makes the resulting agreements more compliant with citizens, even though they do not have formal legal force. This confirms the adaptive interaction between formal and non-formal norms in the community justice ecosystem.

Thus, shadow justice in urban marginalized communities can be understood as a hybrid justice ecosystem that functions to maintain social cohesion while reflecting society's adaptation to structural limitations. The contribution of this research lies in strengthening the theoretical understanding of formal and informal legal relations in urban contexts and providing practical implications for legal policies that are more inclusive, participatory, and responsive to the social realities of marginalized communities.

FURTHER STUDY

Further studies are suggested to explore the dynamics of shadow justice in different urban settings and compare them with rural contexts to identify similarities and variations in informal legal practices. Future research could also investigate the interaction between shadow justice and formal legal institutions, particularly in cases where conflicts escalate or require state intervention.

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