

## Analysis of Underage Motorcycle-Riding Behavior from the Perspective of Social Bond Theory

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### ABSTRACT

Underage motorcycle riding has become a persistent social and road-safety problem in Padang Sarai Urban Village, Koto Tangah District, Padang City, despite legal age and licensing requirements. This study examines the phenomenon through Travis Hirschi's Social Bond Theory, focusing on attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. A qualitative descriptive design was employed as the primary approach, supported by descriptive quantitative data. Primary data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and closed-ended questionnaires, while secondary data were obtained from relevant documents and literature. Informants were selected purposively, and questionnaires were distributed to 98 respondents drawn from 6,369 households using the Slovin formula with a 10% margin of error. Qualitative data were analysed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, whereas questionnaire responses were analysed using frequencies and percentages. The findings indicate that underage motorcycle riding is sustained by weak emotional attachment between children and parents, low commitment to rules and future consequences, limited involvement in constructive activities, strong peer influence, and weak belief in legal and social norms. Parental busyness, permissive family practices, community tolerance, and the normalisation of underage riding further weaken social control. The study concludes that this behaviour is not merely an individual traffic violation but a socially embedded form of deviance. Strengthening parental supervision, family communication, positive youth activities, legal socialisation, and coordinated community control is essential to reduce underage motorcycle use.

Keywords: Underage Motorcycle Riding, Social Bond Theory, Parental Control, Peer Influence, Deviant Behaviour



### INTRODUCTION

The increasing prevalence of motorcycle use among underage children has become a significant social and road-safety concern in many developing urban areas, including Padang City, Indonesia. Although motorcycles provide affordable, flexible, and efficient transportation, their use by children who have not attained the legally required age raises serious questions concerning safety, legal compliance, parental responsibility,

and social control. Indonesian traffic regulations stipulate that individuals must be at least 17 years old to obtain a Class C driving licence for ordinary motorcycles. Nevertheless, children below this age are frequently observed operating motorcycles for school transportation, household errands, leisure activities, and social interaction. This discrepancy between formal legal provisions and everyday practices demonstrates that underage riding is not merely an individual traffic violation but a socially embedded practice sustained by family decisions, mobility needs, and community tolerance. Similar patterns have been identified in studies showing that underage and unlicensed motorcycle use remains common even when adolescents recognise its potential dangers (Jagnoor et al., 2020; Umniyatun et al., 2021; Tongklao et al., 2016; Boonchooduang et al., 2021).

The urgency of this issue is reinforced by the rapid growth of motorised transportation in Padang City. Data presented in Table 1 indicate that motorcycles consistently constituted the largest category of registered motor vehicles between 2022 and 2024, increasing from 185,420 units in 2022 to 195,844 units in 2024. The extensive availability of motorcycles has made them integral to household mobility and has indirectly expanded children's access to motorised transport. In communities where public transport is limited or considered inefficient, parents may allow children to ride motorcycles because such permission reduces the time and costs required to accompany them to school or other destinations. However, this practical accommodation can obscure the risks associated with inadequate driving competence, limited knowledge of traffic regulations, and immature decision-making. The interaction between increased motorcycle ownership, mobility dependence, hazardous traffic environments, and weak rule enforcement therefore creates conditions in which underage riding can become normalised within local communities (Kusumastutie et al., 2024; Kiwango et al., 2024; Nadimi et al., 2021; Le & Blum, 2013).

Table 1. Types of Motor Vehicles by Category in Padang City, 2022-2024

Type of vehicle	2022	2023	2024
Private cars	66,742	75,269	78,410
Buses	11,845	13,222	13,514
Trucks	24,115	26,441	27,208
Motorcycles	185,420	192,150	195,844
Total	288,122	307,082	314,976

Source: Statistics Indonesia, Padang City (2025).

From a developmental perspective, underage motorcycle riding is particularly problematic because early and middle adolescence are periods characterised by identity exploration, heightened emotional responses, sensitivity to social approval, and a limited capacity to anticipate long-term consequences. These characteristics can influence how children perceive speed, traffic regulations, protective equipment, and the possibility of accidents. Children may consider motorcycle riding an expression of independence, maturity, competence, or courage, while underestimating their vulnerability and the potential consequences for other road users. Risky practices such as speeding, carrying excessive numbers of passengers, using mobile phones while riding, performing dangerous manoeuvres, and neglecting helmets may consequently become associated with social recognition rather than danger. Such behaviour reflects an interaction between developmental vulnerability, sensation seeking, perceived control, and inaccurate risk assessment, indicating that legal restrictions alone may not be sufficient

to discourage children from riding motorcycles (Habib et al., 2023; Ertaş et al., 2024; Xue et al., 2024; Yasir et al., 2023).

Family relationships represent another central dimension of the problem because children generally obtain access to motorcycles from their households and frequently begin riding with either explicit or implicit parental permission. Parents may initially authorise motorcycle use for limited purposes, such as travelling to school, purchasing household necessities, or assisting with family activities. Over time, however, this limited permission may develop into unrestricted access, particularly when parents are occupied with employment and cannot consistently monitor their children's mobility. A contradiction therefore emerges: parents may verbally communicate the importance of safety and legal obedience while simultaneously facilitating behaviour that violates traffic regulations. When supervision is inconsistent and communication is weak, children may interpret parental permission as confirmation that underage riding is acceptable. Research on adolescent behaviour has similarly demonstrated that parental attachment, monitoring, family interaction, and household structure influence children's capacity to regulate risk-taking and conform to established social expectations (Phuong et al., 2013; Schieber et al., 2024; Buist et al., 2020; Kroese et al., 2021).

The influence of peer groups further intensifies this situation. As children spend increasing amounts of time outside the family environment, their behaviour becomes more responsive to friendship networks and the expectations attached to group membership. Within peer groups in which motorcycle riding is common, the ability to operate a motorcycle may function as a marker of maturity, masculinity, courage, social status, or belonging. Children who refuse to participate may fear ridicule, exclusion, or being perceived as less capable than their friends. Consequently, they may imitate dangerous riding practices, participate in informal street activities, or disregard parental instructions in order to maintain acceptance within the group. Field observations in Padang Sarai Urban Village illustrate that underage riders are visible in residential areas during both daytime and evening hours, suggesting that the behaviour has acquired a degree of social normality. Peer approval, popularity, identity formation, and group solidarity can thus transform an unlawful activity into a socially valued practice among adolescents (Merdassa, 2024; Saudi et al., 2018; Munir & Malik, 2020; Rebellon et al., 2019).



Figure 1. Underage Motorcyclists in Padang Sarai Urban Village  
Source: Primary data (2025).

Previous research has provided important explanations for adolescent motorcycle use by examining accident characteristics, helmet use, speeding, risk perception,

transport accessibility, and road-safety interventions. Other studies have emphasised the role of inadequate public transportation, limited enforcement, household mobility requirements, and insufficient safety education. Although these studies establish that adolescent riding is shaped by multiple individual and structural factors, much of the existing literature approaches the issue primarily as a transportation, behavioural, or public-health problem. Comparatively less attention has been devoted to the social mechanisms through which parents and communities knowingly tolerate the violation, particularly in rapidly developing suburban communities. Furthermore, studies of adolescent mobility generally discuss parental permission as an accessibility factor without sufficiently explaining how this permission may weaken parental authority and children's internal acceptance of legal norms. This article therefore occupies a distinct position by connecting underage mobility practices with the erosion of family-based and community-based social control (Sukmayasa et al., 2025; Jafari et al., 2025; Pandey et al., 2022; Brown et al., 2023).

To address this gap, the article employs Travis Hirschi's Social Bond Theory as its principal analytical framework. Rather than assuming that children engage in deviant behaviour solely because they possess individual motivations to violate rules, this perspective examines why their relationships with conventional individuals, institutions, activities, and values fail to prevent such behaviour. The analysis focuses on four interconnected dimensions: attachment, which concerns children's emotional relationships with parents and other authority figures; commitment, which refers to their investment in conventional responsibilities and future objectives; involvement, which concerns their participation in socially approved activities; and belief, which represents their acceptance of legal and moral norms. The originality of this article lies in applying these dimensions to explain how parental permission, restricted supervision, peer-group involvement, limited constructive activities, and community tolerance collectively sustain underage motorcycle riding in Padang Sarai Urban Village (Manouchehri et al., 2025; Pritchett et al., 2022; Dufur et al., 2015; Desmond et al., 2013).

Accordingly, this article aims to analyse the behaviour of underage motorcycle riders in Padang Sarai Urban Village, Koto Tengah District, Padang City, by examining the operation and weakening of attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. It specifically investigates how parental occupational demands and emotional relationships influence supervision, how children understand responsibilities and future consequences, how peer interaction and limited involvement in constructive activities encourage risky riding, and how permissive community perceptions weaken respect for traffic regulations. Through this approach, the article seeks to contribute to the sociology of deviance by demonstrating that underage motorcycle riding is produced not only by individual risk preferences but also by interconnected failures of family control, social participation, and normative internalisation. The findings are expected to provide a scientific foundation for strengthening family supervision, developing constructive community activities, improving legal socialisation, and establishing coordinated preventive measures involving parents, schools, community leaders, and traffic authorities.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. The qualitative descriptive design was selected because it enables researchers to develop a comprehensive account of a social phenomenon while remaining close to the meanings, experiences, and everyday language expressed by research participants (Sandelowski,

2000). In this study, the approach facilitated an in-depth understanding of the social realities surrounding parental control over underage children who ride motorcycles. It also allowed the researchers to explore the meanings, behaviours, and social dynamics underlying the phenomenon from the perspectives of the informants. The descriptive design was used to portray the conditions observed in the community systematically and accurately.

Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on criteria established in accordance with the objectives of the study. This sampling technique is appropriate for qualitative research because it enables researchers to deliberately recruit participants who possess relevant experiences and knowledge concerning the phenomenon under investigation (Palinkas et al., 2015). The informants consisted of fathers and mothers with children aged 12–15 years who had ridden motorcycles while underage, children who had experienced motorcycle accidents within the previous year, and community members residing in Padang Sarai Urban Village, Koto Tengah District, Padang City. The study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly through in-depth interviews and field observations, whereas secondary data were collected from documents, academic literature, official publications, and other materials relevant to the research topic.

The qualitative descriptive approach constituted the primary research method, while descriptive quantitative data were employed as supplementary evidence. Quantitative information obtained through questionnaires was used in a limited capacity to map percentage-based trends in community perceptions and to strengthen the interpretation of the qualitative findings. The integration of qualitative and quantitative evidence can provide a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem when each type of data is assigned a clear and complementary function within the study (Fetters et al., 2013). Data were collected through three techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and closed-ended questionnaires. Direct observation was conducted to examine the behaviour of underage motorcycle riders in their social environment. In-depth interviews were used to obtain detailed accounts of the challenges faced by parents and the forms of control they exercised, while questionnaires were administered to identify patterns in parental attitudes and perceptions. The use of multiple data-collection techniques supports a more detailed and contextually grounded understanding of participants' experiences and social practices (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

The population of the study comprised all 6,369 heads of households residing in Padang Sarai Urban Village. Given the relatively large population, the sample size was calculated using the Slovin formula with a 10% margin of error, resulting in 98 respondents. The unit of analysis consisted of parents, specifically fathers and mothers who exercised control over underage children who rode motorcycles. This unit was selected to maintain consistency between the research focus, the research objectives, and the empirical evidence collected during the study.

Qualitative data were analysed using the interactive analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which comprises data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. During data condensation, information obtained from interviews and observations was selected, organised, and classified according to categories related to parental control and underage motorcycle-riding behaviour. The organised data were subsequently presented in narrative form and through simple matrices to facilitate the identification of patterns and relationships. Conclusions were developed through an iterative interpretation and verification of the findings throughout the analytical process. Meanwhile, questionnaire data were analysed using simple

descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages to support and reinforce the qualitative findings (Miles et al., 2014).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the presence of underage motorcycle riders constitutes a response to increasingly high and rapid mobility, which has expanded motorcycle use across various age groups, including underage children. The growing prevalence of underage motorcycle riders reflects the loss and weakening of parental control over children. The lack of awareness among both children who ride motorcycles and their parents regarding the dangers of riding without sufficient maturity can generate various serious problems. Parental involvement has, in fact, contributed to the emergence of new problems associated with this phenomenon. These findings were obtained through interviews and questionnaires distributed to 98 respondents. In this study, the questionnaire was used solely to determine the percentage distribution of respondents' answers concerning parental control over underage motorcycle riders in Padang Sarai Urban Village.

Underage children who ride motorcycles can be categorised as engaging in delinquent behaviour, particularly when they do so without official authorisation, such as without a Driving Licence, without supervision, or in violation of traffic regulations. Hirschi emphasised that "the stronger these bonds, the less likelihood of delinquency," meaning that the stronger an individual's social bonds, the lower the likelihood that the individual will engage in deviant behaviour (Siahaan, 2009). Deviance occurs when an individual's social bonds with law-abiding individuals or institutions become weakened or severed. In this context, internal social control is considered more influential in preventing deviant behaviour than external social control because internal control is based on personal factors, whereas external control concerns rules, punishment, or supervision imposed from outside the individual. Internal social control involves an individual's ability to consider the negative consequences of deviant behaviour and decide not to engage in it. Individuals with strong internal social control tend to possess a high awareness of the risks and negative consequences of violating rules and demonstrate a strong commitment to social values and norms. In addition, a positive social identity and a sense of responsibility within society encourage individuals to behave in accordance with social expectations.

Travis Hirschi proposed four principal elements of internal social control, referred to as social bonds, which can regulate individual behaviour. These four elements are attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. Hirschi maintained that these elements can shape individual behaviour so that it conforms to the social rules prevailing within the surrounding environment (Bobyanti, 2023). These bonds encompass emotional attachment, dedication to values, participation in conventional activities, and belief in existing norms. The stronger these bonds become, the lower the likelihood that an individual will engage in deviance (Faried & Yusuf, 2025). However, when one of these elements of internal social control does not function properly, adolescent deviance may occur. The findings demonstrate that several elements of internal control were weak and consequently influenced the deviant behaviour of underage motorcycle riders in Padang Sarai Urban Village, Koto Tengah District, Padang City.

### 1. Weak Adolescent Attachment to Parents

Attachment or affection is a source of strength that develops through socialisation within primary groups, particularly the family. Through positive interactions and relationships with parents and other family members, adolescents develop strong emotional bonds. Strong attachment to parents can produce a strong commitment to obeying the rules and norms established within the family. When adolescents love or respect their parents, they tend to become more closely connected to family values and expectations, which can assist in the formation of positive behaviour. The family is the principal source of attachment formation during childhood and adolescence. Because the family plays such an important role in teaching attitudes and values, it exerts a substantial influence on adolescents (Hensein, 2006, p. 152). When the family appropriately performs its affective function, it fulfils one of the fundamental human needs of adolescents, namely the need for affection and the feeling of being loved (Yoo, 2017; Deković et al., 2004).

The proper implementation of the affective function within the family creates warm relationships, appropriate care, emotional presence, and positive interactions among family members. These conditions can establish strong attachment among adolescents and thereby prevent them from engaging in deviant behaviour. However, when this affective function does not operate effectively or is transferred to other individuals, children may no longer feel close to their parents because they perceive that their parents do not provide sufficient attention. The needs for intimacy, attention, and affection are nevertheless highly important to children's development (Suhendi & Wahyu, 2001).

When adolescents do not possess strong emotional bonds with their families, they tend to disregard the opinions of family members, neglect their feelings, and fail to consider the effects of their behaviour on other family members. Increasing primary and secondary needs require individuals to make greater efforts to increase their income. A similar condition occurs within households. As parents are responsible for the welfare and needs of their children, many families no longer depend solely on the income earned by the primary breadwinner. In the contemporary era, the increasing difficulty of meeting household needs has resulted in many households performing multiple roles.

A wife who was previously responsible for domestic affairs may begin to perform an additional role as the family's second income earner. The increasing intensity with which both parents work to improve the family's financial condition ultimately affects their children because parental busyness reduces the amount of time children receive from their parents. Parents who work in agriculture or trade frequently spend most of their time away from home, particularly when their places of work are located far from their residences. Parents working as farmers may sometimes stay overnight in rice fields or plantations for several days. Consequently, interaction and communication with their children occur less frequently.

Parents' limited time can reduce the affection provided to their children. Children may feel that their parents do not give them sufficient attention, which can result in emotional distance between children and their parents. Children may no longer feel close to their parents because they believe that they do not receive adequate attention. This condition weakens parental control and enables children to associate freely with individuals in their surrounding environment and become involved in deviant behaviour. Although parents may provide advice and education to their children, the limited time shared between parents and children can affect adolescents' attachment to their parents. Consequently, adolescents who do not have strong emotional bonds with their families

tend to disregard what family members say, neglect their feelings, and fail to consider the effects of their actions on other family members.

Parental functions toward children have begun to operate improperly, thereby weakening and even disrupting parent-child relationships. Consistent with the current phenomenon, many parents allow their children to ride motorcycles despite being underage. This situation arises from parental busyness, which ultimately encourages parents to provide convenience to their children without considering the long-term risks. Weaknesses in the family's affective function can reduce adolescents' attachment to their families and increase the risk of deviant behaviour. In addition to the interview findings, questionnaires distributed to 98 respondents showed that parental busyness was considered a reason for parents allowing their children to ride motorcycles. The questionnaire results are presented in the following table.

Table 2. Parents' Busyness

No.	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Strongly Disagree	1	1.02%
2	Disagree	5	5.10%
3	Moderately Agree	17	17.34%
4	Agree	21	21.42%
5	Strongly Agree	54	55.10%
Total		98	100%

Source: Processed data (2025).

The percentage distribution of questionnaire responses demonstrates that parental busyness was considered a reason for children riding motorcycles. The dominant response was strongly agree, selected by 55.10% of the respondents. It can therefore be concluded that parental busyness, particularly that of mothers who are responsible for household affairs and childcare while simultaneously contributing to household income, influences parents' decisions to allow their children to ride motorcycles. Some parents even provide motorcycles to their children to facilitate their activities because the parents are unable to accompany them continuously.

When adolescents do not have strong emotional bonds with their parents, they tend to disregard the advice and reprimands given by their parents and prefer to spend time with peers who are also involved in such behaviour (Thio, 1993). It is therefore important to strengthen attachment between adolescents and their parents to prevent harmful behaviour. This condition is consistent with Travis Hirschi's Social Bond Theory, particularly the attachment or emotional-bond dimension. Attachment refers to the emotional closeness between individuals and authority figures, in this case parents, who play an important role in internalising social norms and values within children's behaviour.

When this emotional relationship weakens because of parental busyness or because children begin to develop social identities outside the family, parental influence over children's behaviour also declines. Accordingly, the findings indicate that limited parental supervision does not merely affect technical aspects, such as parents' lack of knowledge regarding how their children ride motorcycles, but is also closely associated with weakening emotional bonds as a form of internal social control. Weak attachment creates opportunities for deviant behaviour, particularly violations of legally established minimum-age requirements for motorcycle riding.

## 2. Low Commitment of Children to Rules

Commitment is one of the principal elements of Travis Hirschi's Social Bond Theory. This element reflects an individual's attachment to social norms and responsibilities and awareness of the long-term consequences of their actions. Hirschi explained that individuals with a strong commitment to future objectives, such as education, careers, or a stable life, will reconsider engaging in deviant actions because they recognise that such behaviour may damage their future. One of the principal challenges faced by parents in contemporary child-rearing is controlling motorcycle use by underage children. When children become accustomed to riding motorcycles in their daily lives, whether for travelling to school, playing, or undertaking other social activities, a strong dependence on the vehicle may develop. In practice, this dependence is frequently accompanied by violations of rules mutually agreed upon by parents and children. This phenomenon can be analysed more deeply through Travis Hirschi's Social Bond Theory, particularly the commitment element (Li et al., 2011; Liljeberg et al., 2011).

In Hirschi's theory, commitment refers to the extent to which individuals invest in conventional objectives and aspirations, such as education, social reputation, or a stable future. Individuals with a strong commitment will consider the risks associated with deviant actions because they recognise that such behaviour can damage the opportunities they have developed. Conversely, weak commitment makes individuals more likely to engage in deviance because they do not believe they possess anything that needs to be protected or maintained. Interviews with several parents indicated that underage motorcycle riders tended to demonstrate weak commitment to rules, responsibilities, and their own futures.

For example, children violated agreements concerning the time they should return home from school, used motorcycles for activities unrelated to important needs, or even engaged in dangerous activities such as carrying three people on a motorcycle and participating in informal street racing. Although parents initially provided limited permission, such as allowing motorcycle use only for travelling to school, children frequently misused this trust. This indicates that children did not consider these violations to have potentially harmful effects on their futures.

As explained by Hisyam (2018), strong commitment emerges when individuals recognise that deviant behaviour may threaten their futures. In the present case, however, the children did not possess such awareness and continued to commit violations despite receiving warnings. This weak commitment may have resulted from insufficient motivation to pursue conventional objectives, such as enthusiasm for learning, educational achievement, or involvement in other positive activities. Statements made by the informants reinforce this description. Children who had become accustomed to riding motorcycles were difficult to control, tended to be stubborn and dishonest, and disregarded previously established agreements. These conditions demonstrate that the children's commitment to social agreements and family responsibilities was extremely weak, consistent with Hirschi's view that weak commitment creates opportunities for deviant behaviour. Furthermore, commitment within Hirschi's theory also encompasses awareness of reputation and self-image.

Underage motorcycle riders who committed violations generally had not developed a sense of responsibility for their personal reputations. They were not concerned about social consequences, such as losing their parents' trust or receiving legal sanctions. According to Hirschi, individuals who are not afraid of losing their "social investments" are more likely to engage in deviant actions. In the context of underage motorcycle riding, the level of commitment to rules, education, and social values plays a

significant role in either preventing or encouraging children to commit violations. As explained by Hisyam, individuals who are committed to their futures will avoid deviant actions because they recognise that such behaviour will have negative consequences for their long-term lives. However, underage motorcycle riders tend not to consider risks such as accidents, legal sanctions, or threats to their own safety and that of others.

Weak self-control further aggravates this condition. As stated by Santrock, failure to develop self-control during adolescence can make individuals more susceptible to impulses or environmental pressures (Santrock, 2003). These children frequently fail to consider the consequences of their actions and instead choose to follow peer groups that engage in similar violations. They may regard motorcycle riding as a symbol of courage, freedom, or maturity without considering that it constitutes a legal violation that can endanger safety.

This low level of commitment is also reflected in weak awareness of traffic regulations and laws prohibiting underage children from operating motor vehicles. Rather than recognising that riding a motorcycle without a Driving Licence constitutes a serious violation, these children consider the behaviour part of the normal social culture within their environment. This indicates that legal values have not been firmly internalised because of weak commitment to social rules. Overall, low commitment to education, religion, and social norms is a principal factor encouraging children to commit violations such as underage motorcycle riding. Within Hirschi's theoretical framework, the weaker a child's commitment to conventional objectives, the greater the likelihood that the child will engage in deviant behaviour.

The behaviour of underage children who ride motorcycles and frequently violate established agreements or rules reflects a low level of commitment to values, regulations, and their own futures. According to Hirschi's Social Bond Theory, commitment is an important indicator that explains why these children tend to become involved in violations of legal and social norms. Weak commitment to education, personal safety, and social responsibility enables children to act more freely without considering the long-term consequences. Preventive efforts must therefore focus on instilling responsibility, developing motivation for the future, and strengthening awareness of the consequences of every action through the respective roles of families, schools, and communities.

### 3. Low Positive Involvement of Adolescents with Peers in Underage Motorcycle-Riding Behaviour

Peers are individuals with approximately the same level of age and maturity (Nasution, 2020). They also share a similar social status and tend to establish relatively close relationships because children commonly receive social support within peer groups, including expressions of concern that promote closer relationships. Peers exert a substantial influence on the development of children's behaviour. This influence may be either positive or negative. When children are situated within unhealthy friendship environments, they tend to violate social values (Sulaiman, 2020). Peer pressure and adolescents' ability to resist peer influence are also closely associated with risky driving practices among young riders and drivers (Aktaş & Öztürk, 2024; Smorti et al., 2014).

Children's social-development dynamics also play an important role. As they grow older, children begin to explore social environments and construct identities outside their families, particularly within peer groups and schools. When the amount of time spent outside the home increases, parents' direct involvement in children's activities decreases. Consequently, children become more vulnerable to external values that may not correspond with those taught within the family. Involvement constitutes the third

element examined by Hirschi. In principle, involvement requires individuals to remain occupied with socially acceptable behaviour so that they have no time to engage in deviant activities. Hirschi explained that adolescent involvement concerns the amount of time young people spend interacting with others through particular activities.

Within Travis Hirschi's conceptual framework, involvement is strictly defined as the intensity of physical participation and the allocation of an individual's time to positive and socially legitimate conventional activities, such as completing school assignments, participating in extracurricular activities, exercising, joining organisations, or performing religious practices. Empirical findings in Padang Sarai Urban Village indicate the existence of a "conventional-activity vacuum," or low positive involvement, from the afternoon until the evening. As a rapidly developing suburban area, Padang Sarai Urban Village does not possess adequate public spaces, child-friendly parks, or structured youth-community programmes capable of accommodating the energy of junior-high-school-aged adolescents outside school hours. Children's daily schedules consequently contain a post-school routine gap. This condition theoretically connects low involvement with the emergence of dominant peer influence. The absence of positive activities creates a "routine gap" that is immediately occupied by street-based mobility with peer groups. Children who are not occupied by conventional activities seek "substitute activities" on the streets by riding motorcycles.

Children's strong involvement with peers who frequently ride motorcycles while underage can significantly influence their decisions to commit the same violation. Peer groups contain close emotional and social relationships that shape collective norms and decisions, including those concerning the illegal use of motor vehicles. The findings reveal that strong bonds existed between children and peer groups accustomed to riding motorcycles despite lacking the legally required age and authorisation. These bonds encouraged children to conform to group behaviour to obtain acceptance and recognition. They considered imitating the group's behaviour, in this case underage motorcycle riding, a form of solidarity and a means of maintaining their social position within the group. Interestingly, children who refused to participate could experience social pressure. They feared being considered cowardly, unmanly, or even excluded if they refused to ride motorcycles like their friends. In this context, the desire to be accepted and become an important part of the group was a strong driver of deviant behaviour.

This condition is consistent with Travis Hirschi's social-control theory, particularly the involvement element. Involvement refers to the extent to which individuals participate in conventional and productive activities. When children do not have access to positive and structured involvement, such as school programmes, extracurricular activities, sports, or community activities, they become more vulnerable to seeking alternative forms of involvement, including participation in friendship groups that commit legal violations such as riding motorcycles without a Driving Licence and while underage. In this case, the absence of positive activities resulted in children spending more time with peer groups that provided a sense of belonging and recognition, although through negative means.

Peer influence becomes dominant because peers provide group identity, social status, and emotional support, all of which may be difficult to obtain outside the group. As stated by Hurlock (as cited in Ganta & Soetjningsih, 2022), deviant behaviour frequently occurs because adolescents or children spend more time with peer groups than with their families. In this context, peers play a principal role in shaping attitudes, interests, and deviant actions, including underage motorcycle riding. Imitation and

loyalty to friends also contribute to this behaviour. Children tend to imitate their friends' actions, including illegal riding behaviour. Even when they initially have no intention of violating rules, social pressure and group solidarity encourage them to engage in similar behaviour.

An environment that does not provide positive activities and is characterised by minimal parental or official supervision aggravates the situation. When children have no productive activities to occupy their time and receive no control from families or communities, their potential to seek "activities" in the form of deviant behaviour, such as underage motorcycle riding, becomes greater. Therefore, children's strong involvement with peers who regularly ride motorcycles while underage is an important factor encouraging them to commit similar violations. According to Hirschi's theory, low involvement in positive and meaningful activities increases the possibility that children will seek recognition and companionship through deviant activities. Families, schools, and communities must therefore actively provide positive and constructive activities and consistent supervision to prevent children from becoming involved in deviant behaviour such as underage motorcycle riding.

In the case of underage motorcycle riders, dangerous riding behaviour is generally acquired through a process of learning from and imitating those within their immediate environment, particularly peers. Within peer relationships, children are also encouraged to demonstrate their existence to obtain recognition in their social interactions. Children frequently learn to ride motorcycles from their friends. Currently, an inability to ride a motorcycle may even be regarded as embarrassing because other children of the same age can already operate motorcycles. This constitutes a process of following the behaviour of members of a peer group because being regarded as impressive within the friendship environment is considered more important. Such conditions present difficulties for parents attempting to control their children's motorcycle use. One informant who had an underage motorcycle-riding child acknowledged that the child initially learned to ride from friends. Parental prohibitions and instructions concerning appropriate riding behaviour were also frequently disregarded. Underage child motorcycle riders. Peer influence has a tangible effect on parents' ability to control their children and ensure that they obey rules and behave according to parental expectations. Furthermore, respondents to the questionnaire distributed to 98 parents predominantly strongly agreed that peer influence created difficulties for parental control. Their responses are presented in the following table.

Table 3. Peer Influence

No.	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
2	Disagree	0	0%
3	Moderately Agree	7	7.14%
4	Agree	41	41.83%
5	Strongly Agree	50	51.02%
Total		98	100%

Source: Processed data (2025).

The interview findings and questionnaire results demonstrate that the dominant response was strongly agree, representing 51.02% of all respondents. This indicates that peer influence on underage motorcycle riding creates substantial difficulties for parents in controlling their children's motorcycle use. Several informants also stated that children

listened more closely to their friends than to their own parents. Children easily accepted influences or new practices encountered within their social environments, even when such influences were harmful to them.

#### 4. Low Adolescent Belief in Values and Norms

One element of Travis Hirschi's Social Bond Theory is belief, which refers to the extent to which individuals believe that social or legal rules must be obeyed. This element plays an important role in preventing individuals from engaging in deviant behaviour. Within Hirschi's Social Bond Theory, belief concerns the degree to which individuals accept that social rules and norms are important and must be observed. Individuals with weak belief tend to disregard legal norms and engage in deviant actions (Sarwono, 2021). The field findings demonstrate that weak belief was one of the factors encouraging underage children to ride motorcycles. Research on traffic behaviour similarly shows that beliefs, descriptive norms, and perceived social approval influence intentions to obey or violate traffic regulations and engage in safe or unsafe motorcycle-riding behaviour (Forward, 2009; Tunnicliff et al., 2012).

One indicator of weak belief is the existence of social perceptions that justify deviant actions, particularly underage motorcycle riding. The interview and questionnaire results reveal that many parents and members of the general community considered junior-high-school students sufficiently mature to ride motorcycles, despite not meeting the legal requirements. One informant acknowledged knowing that the child had not reached the legal riding age but continued to provide permission because the child was considered "old enough and capable of riding a motorcycle." The quantitative data indicate that this perception was relatively strong within the community, as 40.81% of respondents agreed and 34.69% strongly agreed with the statement that "children riding motorcycles is a common occurrence." This demonstrates that legal norms were no longer considered important by a substantial proportion of the community and had been displaced by practical considerations such as time efficiency and convenience in performing family activities.

Table 4. Children Riding Motorcycles Is Considered Common

No.	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Strongly Disagree	4	4.08%
2	Disagree	6	6.12%
3	Moderately Agree	14	14.28%
4	Agree	40	40.81%
5	Strongly Agree	34	34.69%
Total		98	100%

Source: Processed data (2025).

Furthermore, community members appeared to regard children riding motorcycles as an ordinary occurrence. This perception was expressed by a neighbourhood association leader in one of the residential areas in Padang Sarai Urban Village, who stated that motorcycle use among children had become highly common and that children who lacked mature riding skills could easily be found operating motorcycles in the area. In terms of whether such behaviour was reasonable, it was certainly unreasonable; nevertheless, motorcycle use among children had become commonplace. In addition to their parents, the children themselves demonstrated indications of weak rule internalisation.

Interviews with several junior-high-school students who rode motorcycles revealed that they generally did not feel guilty or perceive themselves as violating regulations. Several stated that their parents had granted them permission and that their schools did not impose strict sanctions concerning the practice. This indicates that the values or norms prohibiting underage children from riding motorcycles had not been strongly internalised. The children considered these rules irrelevant to their current conditions because their social environments supported the behaviour. This attitude reflects low belief, in which adolescents do not possess a moral conviction that rules must be obeyed because they consider the violation “not particularly wrong” in the absence of immediate consequences.

Another finding that reinforces the weakness of belief is the permissive nature of the environment toward rule violations. An environment that does not reprimand children or reinforce regulations provides no social pressure for them to comply. When violations are regarded as ordinary, belief in the importance of rules gradually diminishes. In this context, weak social norms contribute to the formation of permissive adolescent attitudes toward the law. It can therefore be concluded that the belief element among underage motorcycle riders was weak. Belief in the importance of complying with traffic laws was not firmly established among either the children or their surrounding communities. Permissive community perceptions, weak internalisation of rules within families and schools, and the absence of social sanctions contributed to low belief in established norms. These findings support Hirschi’s assumption that when belief weakens, deviant behaviour becomes more likely to occur.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the phenomenon of underage children riding motorcycles in Padang Sarai, Koto Tengah District, Padang City, is driven by several key factors. First, the attachment element indicates that weak emotional bonds between children and their parents, resulting from parents’ occupational commitments, lead to insufficient supervision and affection, causing children to become emotionally distant from their families. This condition encourages them to seek recognition and attention outside the family, particularly from their peers. Second, a low level of commitment to rules and future goals also contributes to the high incidence of violations. Children who are accustomed to riding motorcycles without legal permission tend to have limited awareness of the associated risks and long-term consequences, including legal violations and threats to their personal safety. Third, the involvement element demonstrates that children’s participation in peer groups that engage in deviant behaviour, such as riding without a Driving Licence, constitutes a major factor in shaping similar conduct. Peer groups become a powerful source of influence, effectively replacing the control ordinarily exercised by families or other institutions. Fourth, the belief element, which refers to confidence in the importance of legal norms and regulations, is also relatively weak. Children, parents, and even the wider community tend to tolerate underage motorcycle use as a normal practice, thereby diminishing the perceived seriousness of the legal violation.

In conclusion, underage motorcycle-riding behaviour in Padang Sarai Urban Village is not merely a matter of casual traffic violations but rather a product of the systemic weakening of the four elements of social bonds. The deterioration of emotional relationships—or attachment—resulting from parents’ economic commitments is combined with children’s limited assessment of future risks, reflecting weak commitment. This condition is further aggravated by the absence of conventional activity

spaces, or weak involvement, which allows peer-group control to dominate this social vacuum. It is also reinforced by the erosion of legal compliance, or belief, caused by the community's cultural normalisation of the behaviour. The most dominant factor sustaining this deviance is the Parental Permission Paradox, in which domestic permission granted for reasons of efficiency undermines the authority of formal law and produces ineffective supervision once children enter public spaces. The weakening of all four elements of social bonds constitutes the dominant factor contributing to the deviant practice of underage motorcycle use. Strengthening internal social bonds through greater parental involvement, the inculcation of social values within families and schools, and consistent supervision is therefore essential to prevent the further spread of this phenomenon within the community.

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