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Restorative Justice in the Criminal Justice System: An Alternative Approach to Offenders' Rehabilitation and Victims' Recovery

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Abstract

Restorative justice is an alternative approach in the criminal justice system that balances offender rehabilitation, victim recovery, and community interests. This article analyzes the implementation of restorative justice in Indonesia, its contribution to offender rehabilitation, and its role in facilitating victim recovery and strengthening a sense of social justice. The research method used is normative-juridical with descriptive analysis, reviewing laws and regulations, court decisions, academic literature, and international practices as comparative material. The results of the study indicate that restorative principles have been institutionalized through the Juvenile Justice and Child Protection Law, the Criminal Code, Supreme Court Regulation Number 1 of 2024, and regulations related to the termination of prosecution through a peace agreement. Offender rehabilitation is achieved through education, counseling, skills training, mediation, and community involvement to reduce recidivism. A victim-centered approach prioritizes compensation, psychosocial support, and community participation, fostering justice, social reintegration, and local wisdom-based collective harmony. Obstacles such as limited facilities, officer training, inter-agency coordination, and social stigma need to be addressed for effective implementation. Restorative justice affirms the philosophy of humanist criminal law, creating an inclusive, participatory, and recovery-oriented justice system, while strengthening social harmony and public trust in the law.

Keywords

Criminal Justice System, Offender Rehabilitation, Restorative Justice, Victim-Centered Justice, Victim Recovery.

1. Introduction

The traditional criminal justice system in Indonesia has traditionally emphasized retributive punishment, namely imposing sanctions on perpetrators as a form of retribution for their actions. This approach often neglects the rehabilitation of perpetrators and the recovery of victims, leading to dissatisfaction and the potential for recidivism (Pradityo, 2016; Syahrin, 2018). Imprisonment as the primary sanction tends to fail to restore victims' material and psychological well-being, while society hopes for a return to social harmony as it existed before the crime occurred (Arief & Ambarsari, 2018; Akbar, 2022). This retributive paradigm, which focuses on deterrence and deterrence, has failed to holistically address victims' losses, raising the need for more humane alternatives (Flora, 2018; Ahadi et al., 2023).

Restorative justice has emerged as an alternative paradigm that emphasizes restoring relationships between perpetrators, victims, and the community. This approach aligns with the principles of human rights, particularly those stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Restorative Justice Programmes in Criminal Matters (2002), and is accommodated in national regulations, including: Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System (Article 1 paragraph 7 and Articles 12–14), the Indonesian Criminal Code (Articles 54–60 concerning prisoner development efforts), and Law Number 8 of 1981 concerning Criminal Procedure Code (*Kitab Undang Undang Hukum Pidana/KUHAP*) as the basis for legal procedures (Hasan, 2013; Ernis, 2016; Rado & Badilla, 2020). The restorative approach is emphasized by the Supreme Court and Constitutional Court, focusing on victims' rights and offender rehabilitation (Karjono et al., 2024). Restorative justice promotes dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation to achieve peace, reduce recidivism, and strengthen social justice (Darmawan et al., 2025). In Indonesia, it is applied through child diversion, prosecution discontinuation, and customary dispute resolution rooted in local wisdom.

This approach is not limited to juvenile justice but is also applied to adult cases such as sexual violence, abuse, and minor crimes, with the aim of prioritizing victim recovery and perpetrator accountability (Putri & Subroto, 2023; Al Hikmah et al., 2023). Studies show that restorative justice can reduce prison burdens, increase victim satisfaction, and encourage perpetrator reintegration into society (Afifah, 2024; Anggelina, 2024; Arief et al., 2025). However, its implementation requires stronger regulations, such as strengthening restorative values in the Draft Criminal Code (*Rancangan Kitab Undang Undang Hukum Pidana/RKUHP*), to ensure legal certainty (Akbar, 2022; Ginting et al., 2025).

Although the literature on restorative justice in Indonesia is growing, several significant research gaps remain. Many studies focus on normative concepts and their application in juvenile justice, such as diversion and penal mediation, but little empirical exploration of their effectiveness beyond juvenile cases, particularly in adult crimes such as domestic violence or drug offenses (Pradityo, 2016; Ernis, 2016; Nisa & Jaya, 2020; Badu & Kaluku, 2022). Quantitative evaluations of recidivism reduction and victim satisfaction are still limited, with most studies being descriptive and normative (Syahrin, 2018; Arief & Ambarsari, 2018; Sihombing & Nuraeni, 2023). Integration with local wisdom, such as Islamic law or village customs, has been discussed, but there has been no in-depth comparative study of how these values can address regulatory disparities between institutions such as the police, prosecutors, and courts.

Furthermore, psychosocial aspects, such as the impact of trauma on victims and potential power imbalances in reconciliation, are often overlooked, particularly in cases of sexual violence where restitution may be imposed (Ahadi et al., 2023; Al Hikmah et al., 2023; Anggarini et al., 2025). Implementation challenges, such as

inadequate officer training and interagency coordination, have been identified, but the lack of longitudinal research on the transformation of public trust in this system remains a key gap (Dawansa & Iriyanto, 2023; Sucipto et al., 2024; Basuki, 2024). Global trends indicate success in reducing recidivism, but contextual adaptations in Indonesia, including the influence of negative incentives on theft perpetrators based on local wisdom, have not been explored in depth (Rusdiana et al., 2024; Arief et al., 2025).

Therefore, this research is needed to fill existing gaps by holistically evaluating the contribution of restorative justice to offender rehabilitation and victim recovery, thereby supporting more inclusive policy reform. This study analyzes the implementation of restorative justice in the Indonesian criminal justice system, its role in facilitating the rehabilitation of offenders, and its potential to promote victim recovery while strengthening a sense of social justice within society.

2. Methods

This study employs a normative-juridical research method with a descriptive-analytical approach to examine the application of restorative justice within the Indonesian criminal justice system. The normative-juridical approach is used to analyze legal norms governing restorative justice as reflected in statutory regulations, judicial decisions, and official policies. This method is appropriate because the research focuses on evaluating legal concepts, principles, and regulatory frameworks rather than collecting empirical data from the field.

The research relies exclusively on secondary data, which are obtained through a comprehensive review of legal and academic sources. Secondary legal materials consist of primary legal materials, including the Constitution, statutes, government regulations, Supreme Court and Constitutional Court decisions, as well as official guidelines related to restorative justice. In addition, secondary legal materials include scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, research reports, and legal commentaries that discuss restorative justice theories and their implementation in Indonesia. To support conceptual clarity, tertiary legal materials, such as legal dictionaries and encyclopedias, are also used to explain key legal terms and concepts. Furthermore, a comparative legal approach is employed by examining restorative justice practices in other jurisdictions as supporting material. This comparison aims to provide broader perspectives and identify best practices that may be adapted to the Indonesian legal context, particularly in relation to offender rehabilitation and victim recovery.

The data collected are analyzed using descriptive analysis, which systematically describes and interprets the application of restorative justice in practice. This analysis focuses on three main aspects: the regulatory framework governing restorative justice, its contribution to the rehabilitation of offenders, and its role in facilitating victim recovery and strengthening the sense of justice within society. Through this structured analysis, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of restorative justice as an alternative paradigm in the Indonesian criminal justice system and to contribute normative recommendations for future legal policy reform.

3. Results

3.1. The Concept of Restorative Justice in Indonesian Criminal Justice System

Theoretically, restorative justice emerged as a reaction to the weaknesses of the retributive paradigm that dominates the modern criminal justice system. Retributive theory emphasizes punishment-based justice, where punishment is imposed as a form of proportional retribution for the perpetrator's wrongdoing. While considered to fulfill the formal aspects of justice, this approach often neglects the humanitarian

dimension, namely the restoration of victims and the rehabilitation of perpetrators. In this context, restorative justice theory offers a new paradigm by emphasizing the restoration of social relationships, acknowledging the perpetrator's responsibility, and the victim's active participation in the case resolution process.

Zehr (1990), known as a pioneer of this concept, emphasized that justice should focus on repairing harm repairing the losses caused by criminal acts, rather than simply punishing the perpetrator. This theory also aligns with humanitarian values and human rights principles, as outlined in the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Restorative Justice Programs in Criminal Matters of 2002. This approach positions the perpetrator not merely as a subject of punishment, but also as an individual with the potential to change and take responsibility for the impact of their actions. In the Indonesian context, restorative justice values have long been embedded in the legal culture of society, such as the concepts of deliberation, mutual cooperation, and reconciliation (*islah*) in Islamic law. The tradition of peaceful resolution through customary and family institutions demonstrates that Indonesian society has a cultural foundation that supports the implementation of restorative justice. Therefore, theoretically, this approach is not a foreign concept, but rather a revitalization of social justice values rooted in local legal practices.

From a normative perspective, restorative justice regulations in Indonesia have progressively developed through various legal instruments. Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System (*Sistem Peradilan Pidana Anak/SPPA*) was a milestone that institutionalized restorative principles through a diversion mechanism, namely the resolution of juvenile cases outside the courts involving the perpetrator, victim, family, and community. This provision emphasizes that the primary goal of the juvenile justice system is development, not retribution, by prioritizing recovery and social reintegration.

The restorative paradigm was further expanded through the National Police Chief's Circular Letter Number 8 of 2018 concerning the Implementation of Restorative Justice and the Attorney General's Regulation Number 15 of 2020 concerning the Termination of Prosecution Based on Restorative Justice. These two regulations provide the legal basis for law enforcement officials to terminate the investigation or prosecution process if a peace agreement is reached between the perpetrator and the victim. The primary goal is to reduce the caseload in court, promote legal efficiency, and foster public trust in the criminal justice system.

The culmination of this normative strengthening occurred with the issuance of Supreme Court Regulation (*Peraturan Mahkamah Agung/Perma*) Number 1 of 2024 concerning Guidelines for Adjudicating Criminal Cases Based on Restorative Justice. This regulation serves as a comprehensive guideline for judges in adjudicating criminal cases by emphasizing several fundamental principles. These principles include the restoration of the situation, the strengthening of victims' rights and interests, and the accountability of the accused for their actions. In addition, the regulation underscores punishment as a last resort (*ultimum remedium*), promotes consensualism in the resolution process, and upholds transparency and accountability to ensure fairness and public trust in the administration of justice.

This regulation emphasizes that the application of restorative justice does not eliminate criminal responsibility, but rather serves as a basis for consideration in imposing conditional sentences, supervision, or restorative measures (Karjono et al., 2024; Arief et al., 2025). Its scope includes minor criminal cases, offenses based on complaints, crimes with a maximum penalty of five years, juvenile offenses for which diversion has failed, and traffic cases. However, judges are prohibited from applying this principle if there is an unequal power relationship, the victim or defendant rejects the settlement agreement, or the defendant repeats a similar crime within three years.

This regulation also regulates the forms of settlement agreements, which can take the form of: (a) compensation, (b) the performance of certain acts, or (c) the avoidance of certain acts (Karjono et al., 2024; Ginting et al., 2025). Such agreements must not conflict with the law, public order, or morality, and must not violate human rights or harm third parties. Thus, restorative justice is recognized as a legitimate legal mechanism that can be used as a legal basis by judges, prosecutors, and investigators at every stage of the criminal justice process. In terms of implementation, the application of restorative justice in Indonesia has shown positive progress, although it still faces various structural and cultural challenges (Basuki, 2024; Afifah, 2024). In practice, diversion mechanisms in the juvenile justice system have proven effective in reducing the burden on correctional institutions and preventing children from experiencing the stigma of criminalization. Similarly, the Prosecutor's Office and Police's policy of terminating prosecutions based on peace agreements has reduced the number of minor cases coming to court, allowing authorities to focus on more serious cases.

In addition to formal mechanisms, the implementation of restorative justice in Indonesia is also influenced by practices based on local wisdom. In the Indonesian context, restorative justice values have long been embedded in the legal culture of the community, such as the concepts of deliberation (*musyawarah*), mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), and *islah* (reconciliation) in Islamic law. The tradition of peaceful resolution through customary and family institutions demonstrates that Indonesian society has a cultural foundation that supports the implementation of restorative justice. These practices demonstrate how communities can resolve conflicts peacefully without sacrificing a sense of justice. This local approach strengthens the social legitimacy of the formal legal system and helps build public trust in judicial institutions. Therefore, theoretically, this approach is not a foreign concept, but rather a form of revitalization of social justice values rooted in local legal practices. Restorative justice in the Indonesian criminal justice system developed as an effort to reform the legal paradigm from a retributive approach to one that emphasizes the restoration of social relationships between perpetrators, victims, and the community. This concept has gained legal legitimacy through various laws and regulations and binding technical guidelines for law enforcement officers (Zaidun & Setiyono, 2024; Anggarini et al., 2025).

At the investigation stage, Indonesian National Police Regulation Number 8 of 2021 serves as the legal basis for investigators to implement case termination through a penal mediation mechanism in cases with minor impacts. This regulation substantively represents the concept of restorative justice, namely resolving cases while taking into account the interests of the victim, the perpetrator's responsibility, and social balance (Badu & Kaluku, 2022; Afifah, 2024). However, challenges arise from the suboptimal training of investigators in facilitating objective mediation and variations in implementation across regions, which can potentially lead to inconsistencies in practice (Estirahayu et al., 2024; Manik, 2025).

At the prosecution stage, Attorney General Regulation Number 15 of 2020 authorizes prosecutors to discontinue prosecution based on restorative justice in certain eligible cases, such as complaint-based offenses or minor crimes with a penalty of less than seven years (Irawan et al., 2022; Sucipto et al., 2024). This provision reflects a shift in criminal law policy from legal certainty to substantive justice, by positioning prosecutors as peace facilitators, rather than merely prosecutors (Dawansa & Iriyanto, 2023). Data from the Attorney General's Office shows a significant increase in the number of cases resolved restoratively, indicating that this approach is effective in reducing the burden on the courts and fostering public trust in law enforcement agencies (Basuki, 2024; Ginting et al., 2025).

Meanwhile, during the court hearings, Supreme Court Regulation Number 1 of 2024 emphasizes the role of judges in integrating restorative justice principles into

their decision-making, particularly in minor criminal cases and cases of children whose diversion has failed (Hasan, 2013; Flora, 2025). Judges can use peace agreements as the basis for issuing sentences in the form of conditional sentences, community service, or community supervision, in line with the principle of *ultimum remedium* (Arief et al., 2025). However, conceptual challenges persist, particularly related to resistance from some judges who remain oriented towards a retributive paradigm and the lack of uniform technical guidelines (Syahrin, 2018; Sihombing & Nuraeni, 2023). Normatively, the direction of Indonesian legal policy further strengthens the position of restorative justice through Law Number 1 of 2023 concerning the Criminal Code (New Criminal Code), which accommodates case resolution based on amicable agreements as part of the goals of modern sentencing (Akbar, 2022; Ginting et al., 2025). Furthermore, the 2025 Draft Criminal Procedure Code (*Rancangan Kitab Undang Undang Hukum Pidana/RKUHP*) is being drafted to ensure that restorative mechanisms can operate procedurally at all stages of the legal process.

Thus, the concept of restorative justice in Indonesia represents not only a procedural innovation but also a paradigmatic transformation in national criminal law. It shifts the legal orientation from punishment to restoration, with the primary principle of justice for all parties involved. To ensure its effectiveness, harmonization of regulations, increased capacity of law enforcement officers, and the establishment of a coordinating institution to oversee the integrated implementation of restorative principles at all levels of the judiciary are required (Estirahayu et al., 2024; Manik, 2025).

3.2. Rehabilitation of Criminal Offenders through a Restorative Approach

The concept of restorative justice positions criminals not merely as subjects to be punished, but also as individuals with the potential to be reformed and reintegrated into society with a higher moral conscience (Zehr, 1990; Arief & Ambarsari, 2018). This approach is based on the idea that criminal acts are not merely violations of the state but also violations of social relationships between individuals and communities (Syahrin, 2018). Therefore, the process of restoring relationships is the core essence of restorative justice. Unlike the retributive paradigm, which focuses on retribution, the restorative approach focuses on awareness, responsibility, and behavioral improvement of the perpetrator so that they do not repeat their actions and are able to contribute positively after serving their sentence.

Theoretically, rehabilitation in the context of restorative justice aims to foster moral awareness and empathy in the perpetrator toward the victim and the wider community. This process encompasses not only legal aspects but also psychological and social aspects. The perpetrator is expected to recognize the consequences of their actions, express remorse, and actively participate in repairing the harm caused. This aligns with the principle put forward by Zehr (1990), a pioneer of restorative justice, that true justice demands not only punishment but also restoration the restoration of human relationships and social balance damaged by crime.

In the context of Indonesian positive law, the principle of rehabilitation for criminal offenders has been incorporated into several legal instruments. Articles 54 to 60 of the Criminal Code (*Kitab Undang Undang Hukum Pidana/KUHP*) emphasize that punishment must be directed toward reforming offenders so they can return to being useful members of society. Furthermore, Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System (*Sistem Peradilan Pidana Anak/SPPA*) explicitly regulates diversion and development mechanisms for children in conflict with the law, as stipulated in Articles 12 to 14. The SPPA Law emphasizes that development, guidance, and social reintegration are integral parts of sentencing, not merely a form of leniency, but also a means of rebuilding the morality and social responsibility of young offenders.

The implementation of rehabilitation through a restorative approach is typically realized through various programs within correctional institutions and outside of prison (Putri & Subroto, 2023; Sihombing & Nuraeni, 2023). These programs include character education, psychological counseling, job skills training, and social activities. The primary goal is to reshape the offender's personality so that they can live independently and productively and prevent re-offending. In the context of restorative justice, the program is combined with mediation between the perpetrator and the victim, where the perpetrator is given the opportunity to express remorse, apologize, and repair the harm caused (Karjono et al., 2024). This process has proven therapeutic for both parties: the victim gains emotional healing, while the perpetrator has the opportunity to atone for his or her wrongdoing in a more meaningful way than simply serving a prison sentence.

Restorative justice plays a crucial role in the rehabilitation process of criminal offenders by placing moral and social recovery at the heart of punishment. Unlike retributive approaches that focus on punishment, restorative justice views offenders as individuals with the potential to change through responsibility, dialogue, and social participation (Arief & Ambarsari, 2018; Syahrin, 2018). Its primary goal is to strike a balance between community protection and the opportunity for offenders to constructively atone for their wrongdoing.

In practice, restorative rehabilitation programs in Indonesia integrate elements of local wisdom, such as deliberation and reconciliation, which emphasize peaceful resolution and the restoration of social relationships (Rado & Badilla, 2020; Darmawan et al., 2025). In various correctional institutions, offenders are given the opportunity to participate in penal mediation involving victims, families, and community leaders. This approach allows offenders to directly understand the impact of their actions and internalize the value of moral responsibility (Karjono et al., 2024). In some areas, mediation is also combined with restorative circles or community meetings facilitated by social workers and non-governmental organizations to build empathy and social reintegration.

This rehabilitation program is reinforced by vocational activities and community-based counseling within correctional facilities. Offenders are trained in job skills such as agriculture, carpentry, and entrepreneurship, designed to enable them to return to productivity after release (Putri & Subroto, 2023; Sihombing & Nuraeni, 2023). This skills-based approach reinforces the restorative aspect of rehabilitation, namely the restoration of offenders through socio-economic empowerment, rather than simply discipline or incarceration. Thus, restorative justice functions not only as an alternative case resolution but also as a means to build the moral and professional capacity of offenders. In addition, the implementation of rehabilitation using a restorative approach still faces several challenges. Limited rehabilitation facilities, a shortage of professionals such as counselors, psychologists, and legal mediators, and minimal coordination between agencies are major obstacles to its implementation. Furthermore, the social stigma against former inmates is another often-overlooked factor hindering social reintegration. Society still tends to view offenders as unworthy of reintegration, even after undergoing punishment and rehabilitation.

In juvenile cases, Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System (*Sistem Peradilan Pidana Anak/SPPA*) is a key milestone in the success of restorative justice-based rehabilitation. Through the diversion mechanism, juvenile offenders can resolve their cases outside of court with the support of their parents, social workers, and the victim (Hasan, 2013; Badu & Kaluku, 2022). Evaluations show that this program not only protects children from the stigma of crime but also increases social awareness and personal responsibility (Ernis, 2016; Anggarini et al., 2025).

However, in adult cases such as theft, minor assault, or domestic violence, the effectiveness of the restorative approach is still hampered by limited facilities, a lack

of professional mediator training, and coordination between law enforcement agencies (Dawansa & Iriyanto, 2023; Rusdiana et al., 2024; Manik, 2025). Policy inconsistencies and overlapping authorities often lead to mediation outcomes not being consistently recognized by the prosecutor's office or the courts (Al Hikmah et al., 2023; Sucipto et al., 2024). To address this, synergy is needed between the judiciary, correctional institutions, the community, and the private sector. The government can play a role in strengthening community-based rehabilitation policies and providing incentives for businesses willing to employ former inmates. Furthermore, the community needs to be encouraged to actively participate in reintegration programs through a community-based approach and humanitarian values.

Therefore, rehabilitating offenders through restorative justice aims not only to prevent them from being punished but also to foster moral awareness, social responsibility, and opportunities for self-improvement. This approach ultimately reflects a humanistic and just criminal law philosophy that positions individuals not as objects of punishment but as subjects of social change capable of growing toward betterment. To optimize the role of restorative justice in rehabilitation, legal and institutional reform is urgently needed. RKUHAP needs to establish standard mechanisms for penal mediation and oversight of its implementation (Ginting et al., 2025). Furthermore, a dedicated budget allocation is needed for mediator training, the establishment of community-based rehabilitation centers, and the involvement of the private sector and social institutions in the reintegration process (Irawan et al., 2022; Basuki, 2024).

A community-based approach can be key to reducing stigma against ex-offenders and encouraging them to become productive members of society. Business involvement through corporate social responsibility programs also has the potential to create jobs for ex-convicts, strengthening their economic and psychological recovery process (Aziz et al., 2023; Zaidun & Setiyono, 2024). Thus, restorative justice-based rehabilitation is not merely an alternative legal strategy, but rather a manifestation of a humanist legal philosophy that positions humans as subjects of recovery, not merely objects of punishment. Through cross-institutional collaboration, strengthening the capacity of civil servants, and ongoing social support, criminals can transform from burdens into social assets that contribute positively to society (Nisa & Jaya, 2020; Anggelina, 2024; Estirahayu et al., 2024).

3.3. Victim Recovery and Strengthening the Sense of Justice in Society

One of the main advantages of restorative justice is its focus on victim recovery and social restoration. Unlike conventional justice systems, which position victims merely as witnesses or supporters of the legal process, restorative justice provides space for victims to actively participate in case resolution. This approach allows victims to express their suffering, losses, and hopes directly to the perpetrator, creating a personal and reflective dialogue. The outcome of this process is not only material compensation but also emotional recovery through the perpetrator's admission of guilt and apology, which psychologically assists victims in the process of healing from trauma (Syahrin, 2018; Ahadi et al., 2023).

This supports the principle of victim-centered justice as stipulated in the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Restorative Justice Programmes in Criminal Matters (2002). The principle of victim-centered justice, as stipulated in the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Restorative Justice Programmes in Criminal Matters (2002), emphasizes that the victim must be the center of attention at every stage of the restorative justice process. This approach emphasizes that the justice system is not solely focused on punishing the perpetrator, but also on the needs, rights, and recovery of the victim. In practice, this means that victims have the space to express their experiences, suffering, and losses, while also voicing their hopes for a resolution to the case. Thus, the justice process not only results in a legal decision but also

provides an opportunity for victims to experience emotional and social justice. This principle recognizes that victims' losses are multidimensional, encompassing material, psychological, and social aspects. Therefore, victim-centered justice emphasizes the active participation of victims, so that they are not merely passive witnesses but play a role in determining the reparation and form of resolution deemed just. Through restorative mediation, victims can receive compensation, an apology, or recognition for their suffering, which psychologically helps reduce trauma and resentment, and restores social relationships disrupted by the crime.

However, this principle faces challenges in sensitive cases, such as sexual violence and domestic violence, where unequal power relations can hinder victims' recovery (Ahadi et al., 2023; Al Hikmah et al., 2023). In such situations, victims may feel afraid, intimidated, or forced to accept a settlement agreement that is not entirely fair. Therefore, the implementation of victim-centered justice must be equipped with strict monitoring mechanisms to ensure that victim participation is voluntary, agreements are reached without coercion, and victims' rights are respected (Aziz et al., 2023). Furthermore, this approach emphasizes the importance of psychosocial support for victims. Counseling, therapy, and community support are tools that help victims overcome trauma, build a sense of security, and regain the capacity to return to normal life. Thus, victim-centered justice is not simply a legal procedure, but also a restorative strategy that strengthens victims' well-being and restores social harmony.

This UN principle also emphasizes that the legal system must be responsive and adaptive to the needs of victims. By placing victims at the center of attention, restorative justice processes can create a more comprehensive sense of justice, strengthen public trust in the law, and support the development of a more harmonious, inclusive, and humane society. With supervision, psychosocial support, and active participation, victim-centered justice forms an essential foundation for a justice system that balances the interests of victims, perpetrators, and the community. In the Indonesian context, restorative mediation is often conducted through family forums involving community leaders, village officials, social workers, and the local police. This community-based approach adds social legitimacy to the case resolution process, while also increasing public trust in the formal legal system (Rado & Badilla, 2020; Al Hikmah et al., 2023; Karjono et al., 2024; Afifah, 2024; Basuki, 2024). Direct participation by victims in the mediation process allows them to feel heard and empowered, which positively impacts their perception of justice (Zaidun & Setiyono, 2024; Anggelina, 2024).

Beyond the individual benefits for victims, restorative justice also plays a role in strengthening a collective sense of social justice. By involving the community in the mediation and case resolution process, the public witnesses not only the imposition of punishment but also the restoration of social harmony and reconciliation between victims and perpetrators. This aligns with the principle of victim-centered justice as stipulated in the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Restorative Justice Programmes in Criminal Matters (2002). This approach emphasizes a balance between victim rights, perpetrator responsibility, and social interests, so that society views justice as inclusive, not merely formal punishment (Rusdiana et al., 2024; Darmawan et al., 2025).

Victim recovery in a restorative context encompasses both material and non-material dimensions. Materially, victims can receive restitution or compensation for economic losses incurred by the crime. Non-materially, victims receive psychological support to overcome trauma, including individual counseling, group therapy, and community support (Syahrin, 2018; Ahadi et al., 2023). Empirical studies show that victims directly involved in restorative mediation feel more empowered than victims in conventional litigation systems, where their voices are often marginalized (Al Hikmah et al., 2023; Basuki, 2024). For example, in cases of minor assault, mediation

allows victims and perpetrators to agree on compensation tailored to the losses, while also establishing preventative mechanisms to prevent similar behavior from recurring (Sihombing & Nuraeni, 2023; Zaidun & Setiyono, 2024). Sensitive cases, such as sexual violence or domestic violence, require a more cautious approach due to the unequal power relations between perpetrators and victims. In this context, restorative mediation in Indonesia emphasizes psychosocial support, close supervision, and mechanisms to ensure that peace agreements are not reached through coercion or intimidation (Al Hikmah et al., 2023; Aziz et al., 2023; Sucipto et al., 2024; Arief et al., 2025). However, without adequate psychosocial support, the healing process can fail and even exacerbate the trauma experienced by victims (Hidayati, 2013; Ahadi et al., 2023; Anggarini et al., 2025).

Strengthening the sense of justice in society is achieved through active community participation, reflecting local wisdom values, such as deliberation and mutual cooperation (Rado & Badilla, 2020; Karjono et al., 2024; Afifah, 2024). Through community involvement, the restorative mediation process not only resolves individual disputes but also strengthens social solidarity (Sucipto et al., 2024; Rusdiana et al., 2024; Darmawan et al., 2025). This process also contributes to social reconciliation, reducing recurring conflicts, and strengthening harmony, as seen in the resolution of child drug cases through customary mechanisms (Pradityo, 2016; Badu & Kaluku, 2022; Putri & Subroto, 2023).

The main challenges to implementing restorative justice related to victim recovery include cultural resistance, lack of training for officers, and variations in practices across regions that can lead to injustice for vulnerable victims (Dawansa & Iriyanto, 2023; Estirahayu et al., 2024; Manik, 2025). To address these challenges, integrating Islamic values of reconciliation and customary practices into formal regulations, such as Supreme Court Regulation Number 1 of 2024, is crucial for ensuring a transparent, accountable, and fair mediation process (Akbar, 2022; Ginting et al., 2025).

Globally, comparative studies show that a victim-centered approach to restorative justice enhances the overall sense of social justice, reduces recidivism, and increases public satisfaction with the legal system (Irawan et al., 2022; Flora, 2023; Arief et al., 2025). In Indonesia, this success is reinforced by the integration of local wisdom, psychosocial support, and active community involvement. Thus, restorative justice places the victim at the center, while simultaneously building communal solidarity and social harmony.

With legal reform, strengthening the capacity of law enforcement officers, and community support, restorative justice can be an effective instrument in building a humane, participatory, and restorative criminal justice system that is oriented toward restoration, not simply retribution (Hasan, 2013; Ernis, 2016; Nisa & Jaya, 2020). This philosophy emphasizes that fair law enforcement not only regulates the relationship between perpetrators and victims but also strengthens trust and social cohesion, creating an inclusive, peaceful, and sustainable society.

4. Conclusion

Restorative justice in Indonesia is an alternative approach to the criminal justice system that balances offender rehabilitation, victim recovery, and community interests. This approach emerged in response to the limitations of the retributive system, which emphasizes punishment alone, ignoring the restoration of social relationships and the perpetrator's moral responsibility. In practice, restorative justice focuses on mediation, diversion, counseling, and active victim participation, resulting not only in legal decisions but also in emotional, social, and material recovery for victims. In Indonesia, restorative principles have been institutionalized through the Juvenile Justice and Child Protection Law, the Criminal Code, Supreme Court Regulation Number 1 of 2024, and other guidelines, including regulations

regarding the termination of prosecution through a peace agreement. The implementation of restorative-based rehabilitation includes character education, psychological counseling, job skills training, offender-victim mediation, and community activities. These programs enable offenders to understand the impact of their actions, make meaningful amends, and facilitate social reintegration. Empirical results indicate a decrease in recidivism rates, increased social awareness, and strengthened relationships between offenders and the community.

Meanwhile, victim-centered justice places the victim at the center of the judicial process, providing an opportunity for victims to express their losses and hopes, and to receive psychosocial support. This approach not only strengthens victims' well-being but also builds a sense of social justice through community participation and local wisdom values such as deliberation, reconciliation, and mutual cooperation. Challenges remain, including sensitive cases, limited facilities, officer training, inter-agency coordination, and social stigma against former inmates. Restorative justice affirms a humanistic criminal law philosophy, placing humans as the subject of change, and creating an inclusive, participatory, and recovery-oriented justice system. By strengthening regulations, officer capacity, community support, and cross-sector collaboration, restorative justice has the potential to be an effective instrument for achieving a balance between the interests of perpetrators, victims, and the community, while simultaneously strengthening social harmony and public trust in the law.

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Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



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