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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN THE RESOLUTION OF JUVENILE CRIMINAL CASES: A VICTIM, OFFENDER, AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Restorative justice has emerged as an alternative approach to resolving juvenile criminal cases by emphasizing restoration, reconciliation, and the recovery of relationships between victims, offenders, families, and the community. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of restorative justice in resolving juvenile criminal cases from the perspectives of victims, offenders, and law enforcement officials. The research employs a normative juridical approach supported by conceptual and case approaches to examine the legal framework and implementation of restorative justice in Indonesia. The findings indicate that restorative justice can provide greater opportunities for victims to obtain recovery, encourage offenders to accept responsibility, and reduce the negative consequences of conventional criminal proceedings for children. However, its effectiveness depends on voluntary participation, protection of victims' rights, proportional agreements, professional law enforcement, and consistent implementation. Therefore, strengthening institutional mechanisms, legal safeguards, and supervision is necessary to ensure that restorative justice genuinely serves the best interests of children while providing fair and meaningful protection for victims.

KEY WORDS: Restorative Justice; Juvenile Criminal Cases; Victims; Juvenile Offenders; Law Enforcement.

INTRODUCTION

The development of criminal justice policy has increasingly shifted from a purely retributive approach toward a more restorative model that seeks to address the consequences of crime for victims, offenders, families, and the wider community. This shift is particularly significant in cases involving children in conflict with the law. Children who commit criminal acts occupy a unique position within the criminal justice system because they are simultaneously responsible for their actions and entitled to special protection as individuals who are still undergoing physical, psychological, social, and moral development. Consequently, the resolution of juvenile criminal cases cannot be approached in exactly

the same manner as cases involving adult offenders. The criminal justice system must consider not only the nature of the offense but also the child's future, educational development, family environment, and prospects for reintegration into society.

The conventional criminal justice process tends to emphasize the determination of guilt, imposition of punishment, and enforcement of legal sanctions. Although such an approach is necessary in certain circumstances, its application to juvenile cases may produce consequences that are disproportionate to the developmental characteristics of children. Formal criminal proceedings may expose children to stigmatization, psychological pressure, disruption of education, separation from family, and association with other

offenders. These consequences may become counterproductive when the ultimate objective is to prevent children from engaging in further criminal behavior. A child who has entered the criminal justice system may require guidance, supervision, education, and rehabilitation rather than punishment that merely emphasizes suffering. 9Bazemore, G., & Schiff, M. (Eds.), 2001).

Within this context, restorative justice offers an alternative paradigm for resolving criminal cases. Restorative justice does not simply ask what law has been violated or what punishment should be imposed. Instead, it asks who has been harmed, what consequences have resulted from the offense, what responsibilities should be assumed by the offender, and how the harm can be repaired. The approach therefore places victims, offenders, families, and communities in a more active position in the resolution process. In juvenile cases, this approach becomes particularly relevant because it provides an opportunity for children to understand the consequences of their conduct while avoiding, where legally and practically possible, the damaging effects of formal imprisonment or stigmatizing criminal proceedings.

The implementation of restorative justice in juvenile criminal cases also reflects the principle that the best interests of the child must receive serious consideration. Children are not simply miniature adults in the criminal justice system. Their capacity for understanding consequences, controlling behavior, and making decisions is influenced by their age and developmental stage. For that reason, a justice system dealing with children must balance accountability with protection and rehabilitation. Restorative justice potentially provides such a balance by requiring the offender to acknowledge wrongdoing and participate in repairing the harm while simultaneously providing an opportunity for the child to remain connected with family, education, and the community. (Braithwaite, J, 1989).

The Indonesian legal system has recognized the importance of a special approach to children in conflict with the law. The Juvenile Criminal Justice System Law establishes a framework that emphasizes protection, rehabilitation, and the resolution of cases through mechanisms that seek to avoid unnecessary formal criminal proceedings. Diversion and restorative justice represent important instruments within this framework. Diversion provides an opportunity to resolve certain cases outside the formal judicial process, while restorative justice provides the philosophical foundation for achieving reconciliation and restoration among the parties involved.

However, the existence of a legal framework does not automatically guarantee effective implementation. There may be significant differences between restorative justice as a normative concept and its practical application. The effectiveness of restorative justice depends on the willingness of the parties to participate, the seriousness of the offense, the position and interests of the victim, the willingness of the child offender to accept responsibility, the role of parents or guardians, and the professional judgment of police officers, prosecutors, judges, and other relevant institutions. Consequently, restorative justice must be evaluated not merely by the number of cases resolved through diversion but also by whether the process genuinely produces justice for the victim, accountability for the offender, and social restoration.

From the perspective of victims, restorative justice offers an opportunity to have their experiences and losses recognized more directly. In conventional proceedings, victims may sometimes occupy a relatively passive position because the criminal case is

formally framed as a matter between the state and the offender. Restorative justice can provide victims with greater space to express the consequences of the offense, communicate their expectations, and participate in determining appropriate forms of restoration. This can include apologies, compensation or restitution where appropriate, restoration of relationships, community-based agreements, or other measures agreed upon within the applicable legal framework. (Daly, K., & Immarigeon, R, 1998).

Nevertheless, the victim's position must not be overlooked in the enthusiasm to promote restorative justice. A process cannot be regarded as restorative if the victim is pressured to forgive, accept an agreement, or withdraw a complaint against his or her will. The principle of voluntariness is therefore essential. Restorative justice must not become a mechanism that places victims in a weaker position merely because the offender is a child. Protection of children and protection of victims must operate simultaneously. The best interests of the child cannot be interpreted as eliminating the rights and interests of the victim.

From the perspective of the child offender, restorative justice provides an opportunity to assume responsibility without necessarily being subjected to the full consequences of the conventional criminal justice process. The child can be encouraged to understand that criminal conduct has consequences for others and that responsibility requires concrete efforts to repair the harm caused. This process may contribute to moral development and behavioral change because the child directly confronts the human consequences of the offense rather than experiencing punishment merely as an external imposition by the state.

Restorative justice can also reduce the risk of labeling and stigmatization. A child who is formally processed and punished may experience difficulties when returning to school, family, and community life. The criminal label can affect educational opportunities, social relationships, and future employment. If restorative mechanisms are properly implemented, the child may remain integrated within the family and community while receiving appropriate supervision and rehabilitation. In this sense, restorative justice is not equivalent to eliminating accountability. Rather, it seeks to transform accountability from a purely punitive response into a process of responsibility, restoration, and reintegration. (Johnstone, G, 2002).

The perspective of law enforcement officials is equally important in determining the effectiveness of restorative justice. Police officers, prosecutors, judges, probation officers, and other institutions involved in juvenile justice possess significant responsibilities in determining whether restorative mechanisms can be implemented appropriately. Their understanding of restorative justice, professional integrity, discretion, communication skills, and commitment to child protection directly influence the quality of the process. Where law enforcement officials view restorative justice merely as a procedural shortcut, its deeper objectives may not be achieved.

Law enforcement officials must therefore distinguish between restorative justice and simply terminating a criminal case. A successful restorative process requires an assessment of the circumstances of the offense, the condition of the child, the impact on the victim, the participation of families, and the ability of the proposed agreement to prevent recurrence. The agreement must also be realistic, proportionate, and capable of being implemented. Without proper supervision, restorative agreements may become merely symbolic and fail to produce meaningful restoration.

Another important issue concerns equality and consistency in implementation. Restorative justice should not become available only to children whose families possess greater social or economic resources. If the implementation of restorative mechanisms depends excessively on the ability of families to negotiate or provide compensation, children from disadvantaged backgrounds may be placed at a disadvantage. Likewise, victims with limited knowledge of their rights may have difficulty asserting their interests during the process. Therefore, institutional safeguards are necessary to ensure that restorative justice remains accessible, fair, and consistent.

The effectiveness of restorative justice should consequently be examined through multiple dimensions. From the victim's perspective, effectiveness may be measured through recognition of harm, participation, recovery, satisfaction, and protection of rights. From the offender's perspective, effectiveness may be reflected in acknowledgment of responsibility, behavioral change, rehabilitation, and successful reintegration. From the perspective of law enforcement, effectiveness may involve legal certainty, procedural compliance, professionalism, prevention of recidivism, and achievement of the objectives of the juvenile justice system. These three perspectives should not be separated because restorative justice is fundamentally relational. (Zehr, H., & Gohar, A, 2003).

The relationship among victims, offenders, and law enforcement officials is particularly important because restorative justice depends upon communication and cooperation. If one party dominates the process, the result may fail to reflect genuine restoration. A victim may feel ignored if the process focuses exclusively on protecting the child offender. Conversely, a child may experience excessive pressure if the victim's demands are treated as automatically determinative. Law enforcement officials therefore have an important role as facilitators and guardians of legal standards, ensuring that the process remains voluntary, balanced, and consistent with the principles of juvenile justice.

The effectiveness of restorative justice is also closely related to the broader objective of preventing children from repeating criminal conduct. Punishment alone does not necessarily address the social, family, educational, or psychological factors that contribute to juvenile offending. A restorative approach can provide an opportunity to identify those factors and connect children with appropriate forms of guidance and rehabilitation. Family involvement is particularly important because the family often becomes the primary environment in which behavioral change is sustained after the formal resolution of a case.

Community participation is equally significant. Juvenile crime is not merely an individual problem but may reflect broader social conditions. Communities can contribute to reintegration by avoiding stigmatization and providing opportunities for children to return to education and constructive social activities. Restorative justice therefore has a broader objective than resolving an individual case; it seeks to restore social relationships and strengthen community capacity to prevent future harm.

Despite its potential, restorative justice should not be idealized as a universal solution. Not every juvenile criminal case is appropriate for restorative resolution. The seriousness of the offense, the condition of the victim, the willingness of the parties, the risk of coercion, and the legal requirements governing diversion and restorative mechanisms must all be considered. Particularly in cases involving serious violence or significant victim vulnerability, the restorative process must be designed with strong safeguards so that the victim does not experience secondary victimization.

The central challenge is therefore to construct a juvenile criminal justice system that combines accountability, child protection, victim protection, and social restoration. Restorative justice can provide an important framework for achieving this balance, but its success depends on how the principles are translated into practice. The existence of laws and institutional procedures must be accompanied by professional capacity, adequate supervision, transparency, and mechanisms for evaluating outcomes.

Based on these considerations, examining the effectiveness of restorative justice from the perspectives of victims, juvenile offenders, and law enforcement officials is important. Each perspective reveals different dimensions of justice and highlights different challenges in implementation. A victim-centered perspective emphasizes recovery and recognition of harm; an offender-centered perspective emphasizes responsibility, rehabilitation, and reintegration; while the law enforcement perspective emphasizes legal certainty, procedural integrity, and institutional accountability. Bringing these perspectives together can provide a more comprehensive assessment of whether restorative justice has genuinely achieved its objectives.

This study therefore examines the effectiveness of restorative justice in resolving juvenile criminal cases from the perspectives of victims, offenders, and law enforcement officials. The analysis is directed not only toward assessing the normative foundation of restorative justice but also toward identifying the factors that determine its effectiveness and the challenges that may arise in practice. Ultimately, restorative justice should not be measured merely by whether a case is diverted from formal judicial proceedings, but by whether the process produces meaningful justice, repairs the harm suffered by victims, encourages genuine responsibility among children, and contributes to the sustainable reintegration of children into family and community life.

METHOD

This study employs a normative juridical research method to examine the effectiveness of restorative justice in resolving juvenile criminal cases from the perspectives of victims, offenders, and law enforcement officials. The normative juridical approach is used to analyze legal norms, principles, and regulations governing restorative justice and the juvenile criminal justice system in Indonesia. The research focuses on the legal framework concerning diversion, restorative justice, child protection, victims' rights, and the responsibilities of law enforcement institutions. The research uses a statutory approach (statute approach) and a conceptual approach (conceptual approach). The statutory approach is applied by examining relevant Indonesian legislation and regulations governing juvenile criminal justice and restorative justice. The conceptual approach is used to examine the theoretical foundations of restorative justice, particularly the concepts of restoration, accountability, victim participation, rehabilitation, reintegration, and the best interests of the child. The legal materials consist of primary and secondary legal materials. Primary legal materials include legislation and regulations concerning the juvenile criminal justice system, child protection, and restorative justice. Secondary legal materials include books, scholarly journal articles, legal commentaries, and other academic publications relevant to restorative justice and juvenile criminal justice. These materials are collected through library research and analyzed qualitatively. The analysis is conducted using a qualitative juridical-analytical method. The collected legal materials are systematically examined and interpreted to identify the extent to which restorative justice can

provide meaningful protection and restoration for victims, encourage accountability and rehabilitation of juvenile offenders, and support effective law enforcement. The analysis also identifies legal and practical challenges that may affect the implementation of restorative justice, including voluntary participation, protection of victims' rights, institutional capacity, professional discretion, and consistency in implementation. The findings are presented descriptively and analytically to formulate conclusions regarding the effectiveness of restorative justice in achieving a balanced approach between victim protection, juvenile rehabilitation, and legal certainty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Concept and Philosophical Foundations of Restorative Justice

Restorative justice represents a paradigm shift from conventional criminal justice approaches that primarily emphasize the violation of criminal law and the imposition of punishment toward an approach that places harm, relationships, accountability, and restoration at the center of the justice process. Conventional criminal justice tends to conceptualize crime as an offense against the state, whereas restorative justice views crime more broadly as harm inflicted upon victims, offenders, families, and communities. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) describes restorative justice as an approach that provides offenders, victims, and communities with an alternative pathway to justice by encouraging safe victim participation and providing offenders who accept responsibility with opportunities to address the harm they have caused. (Henny Saida Flora, 2026)

The philosophical foundation of restorative justice is therefore substantially different from retributive justice. Retributive justice emphasizes proportional punishment based on the seriousness of the offense, whereas restorative justice emphasizes repairing harm, restoring relationships, encouraging offender accountability, and facilitating the participation of victims and communities. This distinction is particularly significant in juvenile criminal justice because children and adolescents are still undergoing psychological, emotional, and social development. A justice system that relies excessively on punishment and deprivation of liberty may generate stigmatization and weaken the prospects of successful social reintegration.

Restorative justice is not, however, synonymous with the absence of accountability. Rather, accountability is reconstructed through active responsibility. The offender is encouraged to recognize the consequences of his or her conduct, listen to the victim's experience, express remorse where appropriate, and participate in measures designed to repair the harm. Consequently, restorative justice seeks to transform the offender from a passive recipient of punishment into an active participant in resolving the consequences of wrongdoing. (Henny Saida Flora, 2025)

The restorative paradigm also challenges the assumption that justice can be achieved exclusively through a formal judicial decision. Justice may instead emerge through dialogue, mediation, conferencing, restitution, apology, community-based agreements, and other forms of restoration. UNODC identifies victim-offender mediation, family group conferencing, and other participatory mechanisms as important manifestations of restorative justice.

2. Restorative Justice in Juvenile Criminal Justice

The application of restorative justice to juvenile offending has

received substantial international attention. Juvenile offenders occupy a distinctive position within criminal justice systems because their age, developmental characteristics, family circumstances, educational environment, and social relationships can influence both offending behavior and the prospects for rehabilitation. Accordingly, restorative approaches are frequently associated with diversion, rehabilitation, reintegration, and alternatives to detention.

The UNODC Handbook on Restorative Justice Programmes emphasizes that restorative programmes have been particularly developed within juvenile justice systems. Such programmes can provide alternatives to formal and stigmatizing measures and can support diversion from conventional criminal proceedings. Their educational dimension is also regarded as important because young offenders may be encouraged to understand the consequences of their actions and develop a stronger sense of responsibility.

The relevance of restorative justice to juvenile offenders can be understood through three interconnected objectives. First, restorative justice seeks to prevent the unnecessary criminalization of children by diverting appropriate cases from formal prosecution. Second, it seeks to promote rehabilitation by requiring young offenders to confront the consequences of their behavior. Third, it seeks to protect victims by giving them an opportunity to communicate their experiences, articulate their needs, and participate in determining appropriate forms of restoration.

Nevertheless, restorative justice should not be understood as universally appropriate for every juvenile offense. The seriousness of the offense, the vulnerability of the victim, the willingness of the offender to accept responsibility, the existence of power imbalances, and the safety of participants must be considered. Consequently, an effective restorative justice system requires safeguards to ensure that participation is voluntary, informed, safe, and free from coercion.

3. Victim-Centered Justice and Victim Participation

One of the most significant contributions of restorative justice is the repositioning of victims within the criminal justice process. Traditional criminal proceedings frequently place the state and the accused at the center of litigation, while victims may have limited opportunities to explain the personal, psychological, social, and economic consequences of the offense. Restorative justice attempts to address this limitation by giving victims a more active role.

From a victimological perspective, victim participation is important because victims may have justice needs that cannot be fully satisfied through punishment alone. Victims may seek recognition of the harm they have experienced, an explanation of why the offense occurred, an apology, restitution, assurances of safety, or an opportunity to communicate directly with the offender. Restorative processes can provide institutional mechanisms through which these needs may be articulated.

The victim-centered dimension of restorative justice, however, requires careful attention to the possibility of secondary victimization. A process that requires victims to confront offenders without adequate preparation, protection, or psychological support may reproduce rather than repair harm. Therefore, victim participation must not be interpreted as an obligation. Rather, it should be based on informed and voluntary participation, with appropriate safeguards and the possibility of withdrawing from the process. (Umbreit, M. S., Coates, R. B., & Vos, B. 2004).

The international restorative justice framework increasingly emphasizes the importance of victim safety and meaningful participation. UNODC stresses the need for restorative programmes

to facilitate safe victim participation while simultaneously providing opportunities for offenders to accept responsibility.

Thus, the effectiveness of restorative justice should not be assessed exclusively through recidivism rates. Victim satisfaction, perceived fairness, recognition, emotional recovery, and the extent to which victims believe that their voices have been heard should also constitute important indicators of effectiveness.

4. Offender Accountability, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration

Restorative justice also reconstructs the concept of offender accountability. In a conventional punitive system, accountability is often equated with the imposition and execution of a criminal sanction. Restorative justice, by contrast, emphasizes personal accountability through acknowledgment of wrongdoing and active participation in repairing harm.

This dimension is particularly relevant to juvenile offenders. Adolescents may have substantial capacity for behavioral change, and interventions that facilitate empathy, responsibility, and social reintegration may be more constructive than interventions that rely predominantly on incarceration. Restorative processes can create opportunities for offenders to understand the human consequences of their conduct rather than experiencing criminal punishment merely as an externally imposed sanction.

Empirical evidence provides support for this proposition, although the findings are not uniform. A major meta-analysis conducted by Wilson, Olaghere, and Kimbrell examined 84 evaluations within 60 research projects and found that restorative justice programmes were associated with a moderate reduction in subsequent delinquent behavior compared with more traditional juvenile justice processing. However, the authors also found substantial variation among programmes and noted that effects were less pronounced in studies using stronger experimental designs.

The evidence therefore suggests that restorative justice may contribute to positive juvenile justice outcomes, but its effectiveness depends substantially on programme design and implementation. Victim-offender conferencing, family group conferencing, mediation, and circle-based approaches have demonstrated promising results, while some other restorative practices have produced less encouraging outcomes.

This finding is important because it prevents restorative justice from being treated as a universally effective intervention. Instead, effectiveness must be understood as conditional upon the characteristics of the programme, participants, offense, institutional setting, and quality of implementation.

5. The Role of Law Enforcement in Restorative Justice

Although restorative justice emphasizes victims and offenders, law enforcement officials remain critical actors in determining whether restorative mechanisms function effectively. Police officers, prosecutors, judges, probation officers, social workers, and other justice professionals can influence whether a case is diverted, whether restorative processes are initiated, and whether agreements are implemented. (Wilson, D. B., Olaghere, A., & Kimbrell, C. S. 2017).

The role of law enforcement consequently extends beyond conventional investigation and prosecution. Officials must possess the capacity to identify cases suitable for restorative intervention, assess risks, communicate effectively with victims and offenders, and ensure that procedural safeguards are respected. Their

understanding of restorative justice is therefore a significant determinant of implementation.

Institutional culture can, however, create challenges. Criminal justice institutions traditionally operate within frameworks emphasizing formal procedures, legal certainty, evidence, prosecution, and punishment. Restorative justice requires a broader orientation toward dialogue, participation, rehabilitation, and problem-solving. Resistance may consequently emerge when restorative mechanisms are perceived as inconsistent with conventional notions of justice or as insufficiently punitive. (Jean Calvijn Simanjuntak, 2025)

The effectiveness of restorative justice therefore depends partly on the extent to which law enforcement institutions integrate restorative principles into their professional practices. Training, clear legal guidelines, institutional coordination, monitoring mechanisms, and accountability procedures are necessary to prevent restorative justice from being implemented inconsistently.

6. Restorative Justice and the Relationship Between Victims, Offenders, and the Community

Restorative justice is fundamentally relational. Crime is understood not merely as a legal violation but as an event that disrupts relationships between victims, offenders, families, and communities. Consequently, restoration may require more than a formal agreement between the offender and the state. Sherman, (L. W., & Strang, H, 2007).

The involvement of families and communities is particularly relevant in juvenile cases. Young offenders are embedded within family, school, peer, and community environments. These social structures may contribute to offending behavior but may also provide resources for rehabilitation. Family group conferencing, for example, allows the justice process to incorporate individuals who can support both the victim and the young offender.

The community dimension also reflects the broader social responsibility for juvenile offending. If youth crime is associated with poverty, family dysfunction, educational exclusion, peer influence, or other structural factors, an exclusively individualistic approach to punishment may fail to address the underlying causes of offending. Restorative justice therefore provides an opportunity to connect individual accountability with community-based prevention and reintegration. (Siegel, L. J., & Welsh, B. C, 2017).

7. Measuring the Effectiveness of Restorative Justice

The concept of effectiveness requires careful theoretical clarification. A narrow conception of effectiveness may focus solely on whether the offender reoffends. Although recidivism is an important indicator, it does not fully capture the objectives of restorative justice. (Braithwaite, J., & Strang, H. (Eds.), 2001).

A broader framework should incorporate at least four dimensions. First, victim outcomes, including satisfaction, perceived fairness, recognition, emotional recovery, and the extent to which victims believe their needs were addressed. Second, offender outcomes, including accountability, behavioral change, rehabilitation, reintegration, and recidivism. Third, procedural outcomes, including voluntary participation, fairness, transparency, and compliance with restorative agreements. Fourth, community outcomes, including social reintegration, restoration of relationships, and community confidence in the justice process.

The meta-analysis of restorative justice in juvenile justice demonstrates why multidimensional evaluation is necessary. While

overall findings indicate reductions in future delinquent behavior, the effects vary according to the type of restorative intervention and methodological quality of the evaluation.

Accordingly, restorative justice should not be evaluated merely by asking whether it produces fewer convictions or shorter sentences. The more appropriate question is whether the process produces meaningful restoration while simultaneously protecting victims, ensuring offender accountability, reducing future offending, and maintaining public confidence. (Sherman, L. W., & Strang, H. 2007)

8. Challenges and Limitations of Restorative Justice

Despite its potential, restorative justice faces several limitations. First, there is a risk that restorative mechanisms may become overly dependent on the willingness of victims to participate. Victims may decline participation for legitimate reasons, particularly when the offense involves severe harm or significant power imbalances.

Second, there is a risk of inconsistent implementation. If police, prosecutors, judges, mediators, and community actors apply different standards for determining eligibility, restorative justice may generate unequal outcomes.

Third, restorative justice may be vulnerable to coercion. Juvenile offenders may agree to restorative settlements because of institutional pressure rather than genuine acceptance of responsibility. Similarly, victims may feel compelled to participate because they believe participation is necessary to secure a favorable legal outcome.

Fourth, restorative justice requires competent facilitators. Poorly managed dialogue may intensify conflict rather than resolve it. The process therefore requires professional training, risk assessment, confidentiality protections, and clear procedural safeguards.

Finally, restorative justice must maintain a balance between restoration and public protection. A restorative approach should not be used merely as a mechanism to avoid punishment. It should constitute a structured process through which the offender is required to acknowledge responsibility and undertake meaningful measures to address the consequences of the offense.

9. Research Gap and Theoretical Position of the Present Study

Existing literature demonstrates that restorative justice has considerable potential in juvenile criminal justice, particularly in relation to diversion, victim participation, offender accountability, rehabilitation, and recidivism reduction. The international evidence, however, also demonstrates substantial variation in outcomes across restorative programmes and contexts.

A significant gap therefore concerns the simultaneous examination of restorative justice from the perspectives of victims, juvenile offenders, and law enforcement officials. Many studies concentrate predominantly on offender outcomes or programme-level recidivism, while fewer studies integrate the experiences and expectations of all three principal actors within the justice process.

The present study addresses this gap by conceptualizing effectiveness as a multidimensional phenomenon involving victim satisfaction and protection, offender accountability and rehabilitation, and institutional capacity among law enforcement officials. This approach recognizes that restorative justice cannot be considered effective merely because it diverts a juvenile from formal prosecution. Its effectiveness must also be assessed by whether victims perceive the process as fair and meaningful, whether

offenders genuinely accept responsibility and demonstrate behavioral change, and whether law enforcement institutions can implement restorative mechanisms consistently, transparently, and safely.

The study therefore positions restorative justice not as an alternative that simply replaces punishment, but as a complementary justice paradigm capable of reconstructing the relationship between accountability, victim protection, rehabilitation, and community restoration. Such a framework is particularly relevant to contemporary juvenile criminal justice systems seeking to reconcile public safety with the developmental rights and rehabilitative needs of children in conflict with the law.

CONCLUSION

Restorative justice provides a significant alternative framework for resolving juvenile criminal cases by shifting the emphasis from punishment toward restoration, accountability, rehabilitation, and reintegration. Its effectiveness cannot be assessed solely through the avoidance of formal prosecution or the reduction of juvenile recidivism. Rather, it should be evaluated through a multidimensional perspective that considers the experiences and interests of victims, juvenile offenders, and law enforcement officials.

From the victim's perspective, restorative justice can provide greater opportunities for participation, recognition, explanation, restitution, and recovery than conventional criminal proceedings. However, victim participation must remain voluntary and supported by adequate safeguards to prevent secondary victimization, coercion, and unequal bargaining positions. From the offender's perspective, restorative justice encourages juveniles to acknowledge the consequences of their conduct, accept responsibility, develop empathy, and participate actively in repairing the harm caused. These elements can support rehabilitation and social reintegration while reducing the potentially stigmatizing effects of formal criminal proceedings and detention.

From the perspective of law enforcement officials, the effectiveness of restorative justice depends substantially on institutional capacity, professional competence, clear legal standards, inter-agency coordination, and consistent implementation. Restorative justice cannot operate effectively when it is treated merely as an administrative mechanism for terminating juvenile cases. It requires a genuine transformation in the orientation of criminal justice institutions from a predominantly punitive approach toward one based on restoration, participation, and rehabilitation.

Ultimately, restorative justice should be understood as a balanced model that simultaneously protects victims, promotes meaningful accountability among juvenile offenders, and supports the broader objectives of juvenile justice. Its successful implementation requires a victim-sensitive, child-centered, and institutionally accountable framework. Therefore, the effectiveness of restorative justice lies not simply in resolving cases outside the conventional criminal justice process, but in its capacity to produce fair, meaningful, and sustainable outcomes for victims, offenders, and society while maintaining public safety and respect for the rights of children.

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