

## **The Effectiveness of a Restorative Justice Based Juvenile Criminal Justice System in Preventing Recidivism**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of a restorative justice based juvenile criminal justice system in preventing recidivism. The research employed a qualitative method with an empirical socio-legal design, chosen for its capacity to comprehensively examine the gap between legal norms and law enforcement practices in the field. This approach enables a contextual analysis of the implementation of restorative justice policies as well as the dynamics of the roles played by law enforcement actors. The study was conducted in Surakarta City, Central Java, a region selected due to its active implementation of diversion mechanisms in handling juvenile cases. The research involved ten informants selected through purposive sampling, consisting of investigators from the Women and Children Protection Unit, prosecutors, juvenile court judges, correctional counselors, social workers, and diversion facilitators. Informant selection was based on their direct involvement in the juvenile criminal justice system to obtain in-depth data and achieve information saturation. The findings indicate that diversion is effective in reducing the risk of recidivism at an early stage; however, its overall effectiveness remains suboptimal due to limited post-diversion assistance and a shortage of professional restorative facilitators. This study recommends strengthening institutional capacity among law enforcement agencies, enhancing continuous post-diversion support, and developing community-based recovery mechanisms to improve the effectiveness of juvenile recidivism prevention.



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## **INTRODUCTION**

Children in conflict with the law constitute a distinct legal subject with specific characteristics, thereby requiring an approach that differs from that applied to adult offenders. In the global context, the paradigm governing the treatment of juvenile offenders has gradually shifted from a repressive model toward a more humane and rehabilitative approach. This shift is driven by growing awareness that criminal justice processes oriented solely toward punishment often generate adverse effects on children's psychological and social development. Numerous studies demonstrate that conventional punitive systems may, in fact, increase the risk of juvenile recidivism due to social stigma, disruption of family ties, and insufficient post-adjudication reintegration support (Casey & Siennick, 2022).

The issue of recidivism among juvenile offenders has therefore attracted increasing attention in both academic discourse and public policy practice. Recidivism does not merely reflect an individual's inability to modify behavior, but also reveals structural limitations within the criminal justice system in fulfilling its corrective and preventive functions (Sheed et al., 2023a). For children, repeated involvement in criminal acts is often closely linked to structural factors, including unfavorable social environments, inadequate supervision, and the system's limited capacity to facilitate sustainable recovery. Consequently, efforts to prevent juvenile recidivism cannot be separated from the design and implementation of the juvenile criminal justice system itself (Wahyudi et al., 2022).

In response to these challenges, many countries have developed modern juvenile justice models that prioritize recovery as the central objective of case resolution processes. Such models emphasize

the importance of balancing the interests of the child, the victim, and the wider community, while promoting alternatives to formal judicial proceedings. Within this framework, restorative justice has emerged as an approach capable of addressing the limitations of traditional punitive systems (Wright & Tabbert, 2022). Restorative justice promotes dialogue, accountability, and the restoration of social relationships, thereby positioning children not merely as offenders but as individuals with the capacity for change and personal development.

In Indonesia, the restorative approach to juvenile justice has been normatively institutionalized through various legal instruments that emphasize the principle of the best interests of the child. The juvenile criminal justice system is designed to provide space for non-litigation case resolution through diversion mechanisms, with the aim of shielding children from the detrimental effects of formal judicial processes (Vohra & Ahuja, 2025). Conceptually, diversion is positioned as a primary instrument to prevent negative labeling and to support children's social reintegration. However, despite the availability of a relatively comprehensive normative legal framework, the implementation of restorative justice in practice continues to encounter significant challenges (Askolani, 2024).

One of the most prominent issues concerns the persistently high risk of reoffending among children who have undergone criminal justice processes, including those resolved through diversion. This phenomenon raises critical questions regarding the effectiveness of restorative justice based juvenile justice systems in achieving the goal of recidivism prevention. In practice, diversion is frequently implemented in a formalistic manner and has not fully reflected participatory and sustainable restorative principles (Rhineberger & Mack, 2024). Recovery processes often conclude at the stage of agreement, without adequate follow-up assistance or systematic evaluation of children's post-resolution development (Sheed et al., 2023).

The gap between legal norms and law enforcement practices constitutes a central problem in this context. On the one hand, regulations mandate a recovery-oriented approach grounded in the best interests of the child. On the other hand, empirical practices reveal limitations in institutional capacity, a shortage of professionally trained restorative facilitators, and insufficient support from both institutions and community networks. These conditions hinder the optimal implementation of restorative justice and may reduce its effectiveness in suppressing recidivism. This gap indicates that the success of juvenile criminal justice systems depends not only on the quality of legal norms but also on the consistency and effectiveness of their implementation.

A review of relevant literature indicates that child protection theory conceptualizes children as rights-bearing subjects who must be safeguarded from the harmful effects of criminal justice interventions. From this perspective, any legal response to juvenile offending should consider developmental needs, vulnerability factors, and rehabilitative potential. Modern juvenile justice models across jurisdictions emphasize the importance of multidisciplinary approaches involving families, communities, and social institutions. Empirical evidence from restorative justice practices in several countries suggests that recidivism prevention is highly influenced by the quality of restorative processes, including facilitator competence and the sustainability of recovery programs (Piquero et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, much of the existing research remains focused on normative policy analysis or general evaluations of juvenile justice systems, with relatively limited in-depth empirical studies examining the practical implementation of restorative approaches. In the Indonesian context, research that explicitly links restorative justice implementation to levels of juvenile recidivism remains scarce. Existing studies generally depict diversion as a progressive policy instrument but seldom assess its actual effectiveness through the lived experiences of law enforcement actors directly involved in the process.

Accordingly, a significant research gap exists between the normative ideals of the juvenile criminal justice system and the practical realities of restorative justice implementation. This gap becomes increasingly salient when examined in relation to recidivism prevention as a key indicator of system effectiveness. This study seeks to address this gap by empirically examining how restorative approaches are implemented in practice and the extent to which they effectively reduce the risk of repeated offending among children.

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of normative and empirical analysis through a qualitative approach that emphasizes the practical experiences of law enforcement actors. By conducting courtroom observations and in-depth interviews with investigators, prosecutors, and

correctional counselors, this research not only assesses diversion as a conceptual framework but also evaluates the dynamics of its implementation in real-world settings. The findings indicate that diversion programs possess significant potential to reduce recidivism, although their effectiveness remains constrained by limited resources, particularly the shortage of professionally competent restorative facilitators.

This study formulates its research questions to examine how restorative approaches are implemented within the juvenile criminal justice system at the level of law enforcement practice, how effective these approaches are in preventing recidivism, and what factors influence their success. These questions aim to explore the relationship between policy design, institutional practices, and outcomes within the broader context of child protection and recidivism prevention.

The objectives of this research are to analyze the effectiveness of restorative justice based juvenile criminal justice systems in preventing recidivism, to identify implementation gaps between legal norms and field practices, and to formulate recommendations for policy and institutional strengthening (Anderson et al., 2024). The study also seeks to examine the roles of law enforcement actors within restorative processes and the implications of resource constraints for the sustainability of juvenile recovery programs.

Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the fields of juvenile criminal law and criminology by providing an empirical perspective on restorative justice approaches. Academically, it contributes to the development of literature evaluating the effectiveness of juvenile justice systems in developing country contexts. From a practical standpoint, the findings may serve as a reference for policymakers and law enforcement agencies in designing capacity-building strategies, including strengthening the role of restorative facilitators and expanding community-based recovery mechanisms (Rido et al., 2025).

This study is not without limitations, particularly due to its qualitative scope and the relatively limited number of informants involved. These limitations restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader contexts. Additionally, the lack of long-term quantitative data on juvenile recidivism poses challenges in comprehensively measuring policy impacts.

Therefore, future research is recommended to adopt more comprehensive methodological approaches by integrating qualitative and quantitative data, as well as expanding the geographical scope of analysis. Further studies should also incorporate the perspectives of children and victims more extensively and develop cross-national comparative analyses to identify best practices in restorative justice based juvenile criminal justice systems for recidivism prevention.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on juvenile criminal justice systems cannot be separated from the development of theories and approaches that position children as legal subjects with distinct needs and vulnerabilities.

International literature reflects a paradigm shift in the treatment of juvenile offenders, moving away from retributive approaches toward models emphasizing protection, rehabilitation, and social reintegration (Wessels & Wijdekop, 2022). This shift is grounded in the understanding that children are in a critical developmental phase and are highly susceptible to environmental influences; consequently, the criminal justice system's response may have long-term implications for behavioral development. Accordingly, this study's literature review is anchored in three principal theoretical frameworks: child protection theory, modern juvenile justice theory, and restorative justice theory (Tjandrawinata, 2025).

Child protection theory was systematically articulated by Philip Alston in the late 1980s, particularly through his works on human rights and the protection of vulnerable groups. Alston, a scholar affiliated with Harvard Law School in the United States, emphasized that children should be recognized as rights-holders requiring special protection from the state, society, and family (Ritchie Josh et al., 2025). Within the context of criminal justice, this theory asserts that all legal processes involving children must prioritize the principle of the best interests of the child and minimize adverse impacts that may hinder physical, mental, and social development. This approach has served as the normative foundation for the emergence of national and international legal instruments governing juvenile justice systems (Alam et al., 2024).

Aligning with child protection theory, Geraldine Van Bueren of Queen Mary University of London developed, in 1995, a conceptual framework emphasizing the intrinsic link between children's rights and criminal justice systems (Calleja & Bowlds, 2024). Van Bueren argued that child protection

within judicial processes extends beyond normative guarantees to include effective implementation mechanisms that ensure children receive fair and dignified treatment. According to her perspective, systemic failure to protect children risks perpetuating cycles of reoffending due to the absence of adequate rehabilitative support. This framework highlights recidivism as an indicator of systemic failure rather than merely individual shortcomings.

Contemporary developments in child protection theory have further reinforced rights-based and welfare-oriented approaches that integrate psychosocial and environmental dimensions into responses to juvenile offending (Adzana et al., 2025). These developments underscore that effective recidivism prevention requires continuous and context-sensitive interventions rather than purely formal case resolutions. In relation to the central problem of this research, child protection theory elucidates that the high risk of juvenile recidivism often stems from a mismatch between children's developmental needs and the responses provided by the criminal justice system.

The second theoretical framework relevant to this study is modern juvenile justice theory, notably advanced by John Braithwaite through his concept of reintegrative shaming in 1989. Braithwaite, a professor at the Australian National University, contended that juvenile justice systems should correct deviant behavior without permanently labeling children as criminals. He maintained that exclusionary justice processes tend to intensify recidivism risk, whereas reintegrative approaches promote accountability while restoring the child's social relationships with the community.

Braithwaite's perspective is supported by Barry C. Feld, a scholar from the University of Minnesota Law School, who has conducted extensive comparative research on juvenile justice systems since the 1990s. Feld emphasized the necessity of distinguishing between juvenile and adult offenders within criminal justice processes. He argued that the effectiveness of juvenile justice systems should not be measured solely by legal certainty or punitive outcomes, but rather by their capacity to prevent reengagement in criminal behavior. Feld's work provides an evaluative framework that positions recidivism as a central indicator of juvenile justice system effectiveness (Sato, 2025).

Recent developments in modern juvenile justice theory demonstrate increasing integration between legal, social, and psychological approaches. Contemporary juvenile justice models emphasize inter-institutional coordination, family involvement, and community engagement as essential components of successful reintegration. In the context of this study, modern juvenile justice theory explains the persistent gap between institutional design and law enforcement practices that remain procedurally oriented. This gap contributes to limited success in preventing recidivism, despite regulatory recognition of the best interests of the child principle. The third theoretical framework underpinning this study is restorative justice theory, popularized by Howard Zehr through his seminal work in 1990 (Connealy, 2025). Zehr, an academic from Eastern Mennonite University in the United States, conceptualized crime not merely as a violation of legal norms but as a harm inflicted upon social relationships. Within restorative justice, case resolution is directed toward repairing harm, facilitating dialogue among stakeholders, and fostering active responsibility on the part of the offender. For children, this approach provides an opportunity to comprehend the consequences of their actions without exposure to the stigmatizing effects of formal judicial proceedings.

The restorative justice framework introduced by Zehr has undergone significant conceptual refinement through the contributions of Kathleen Daly, a professor of criminology at Griffith University, Australia. Daly expanded restorative justice by emphasizing participatory justice, which entails the active involvement of all parties affected by an offense in the recovery process. She argued that restorative justice should not be understood merely as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism, but rather as a social process in which relationships, dialogue, and collective responsibility constitute the essence of justice. Daly further contended that the success of restorative justice initiatives is largely determined by the quality of the process and the competence of facilitators (Jian et al., 2025). Effective restorative processes require safe, equitable, and meaningful spaces for dialogue among offenders, victims, and community representatives. In this framework, facilitators play a crucial role not only in managing procedural aspects but also in guiding dialogue dynamics, managing emotional conflicts, and ensuring adherence to restorative and justice-oriented principles. Without such competencies, restorative processes risk devolving into formalistic procedures devoid of transformative impact.

Daly's analysis underscores that restorative approaches implemented in a purely procedural manner are unlikely to achieve meaningful recovery or effective recidivism prevention. When restorative justice is treated merely as an administrative obligation within criminal justice procedures,

the core values of participation, acknowledgment of harm, and accountability become diluted. As a result, juvenile offenders may fail to fully grasp the impact of their actions, while victims and communities remain insufficiently restored. Ultimately, such conditions diminish the restorative approach's potential to foster long-term behavioral change and reduce recidivism (Ban & Riordan, 2023). The relevance of Daly's conceptual framework is further reinforced by empirical findings from various jurisdictions, which consistently indicate that resource constraints constitute one of the primary barriers to the effective implementation of restorative justice. Across many legal systems, limited numbers of professionally trained facilitators, inadequate specialized training, and weak institutional support hinder the optimal application of restorative approaches. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of restorative justice depends not only on regulatory frameworks but also on institutional readiness and the operational capacity of implementing actors (Meisler et al., 2025).

In contemporary developments, restorative justice theory has undergone a significant expansion in orientation. Restorative approaches are no longer confined to case resolution mechanisms but are increasingly directed toward the construction of sustainable social recovery. Community-based and victim-centered restorative models have gained prominence in response to critiques that formal justice systems often neglect the relational and social dimensions of crime. Within this paradigm, restorative justice is understood as a long-term process aimed at repairing damaged social relationships and strengthening community cohesion (Mack & Rhineberger, 2022).

Current restorative justice approaches also reposition victims as active subjects within the justice process. Victims are no longer treated merely as sources of information or objects of legal protection, but as rights-holders entitled to express their experiences, needs, and expectations for recovery. Simultaneously, offenders are encouraged to assume responsibility voluntarily rather than through coercive mechanisms, thereby enhancing the restorative process's potential to foster moral awareness and social accountability. In the context of children in conflict with the law, this approach is particularly relevant, as it aligns with children's developmental needs and social learning processes (Fauzi et al., 2023). With regard to the central issue of this study namely, the high risk of juvenile recidivism restorative justice theory provides a comprehensive analytical framework for assessing both the effectiveness and limitations of diversion mechanisms. Diversion is conceptualized as an initial instrument that allows children to avoid formal judicial proceedings and the accompanying stigmatization. However, restorative justice theory also emphasizes that case diversion alone is insufficient to ensure long-term behavioral change (Miller & Alves, 2022). The success of diversion is contingent upon the depth of the restorative process and the continuity of post-agreement support and supervision.

Factors constraining the effectiveness of restorative approaches such as the shortage of professional facilitators and weak community support can be conceptually explained within the restorative justice framework. Without competent facilitators, restorative dialogues tend to remain superficial and fail to address the underlying causes of children's behavior. Likewise, inadequate community support undermines the sustainability of restorative outcomes in children's daily lives. Under such conditions, children often return to unchanged environments, thereby perpetuating high risks of repeated offending. Restorative justice theory does not operate in isolation in explaining juvenile recidivism but interacts closely with child protection theory and modern juvenile justice theory (Nyland et al., 2024). Together, these three theoretical frameworks provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of juvenile criminal justice systems. Child protection theory emphasizes that children require special treatment that accounts for developmental stages and inherent vulnerabilities, underscoring the necessity for justice responses that minimize harm and foster optimal development (Draper, 2025).

Meanwhile, modern juvenile justice theory offers an institutional framework for evaluating system success based on rehabilitation and recidivism prevention indicators. This theory posits that juvenile justice systems cannot be assessed solely in terms of legal certainty or procedural efficiency but must be evaluated according to their capacity to prevent children's re-involvement in criminal activity. Within this perspective, diversion and restorative approaches function as strategic instruments that must be consistently integrated into the institutional design of juvenile justice systems.

The integration of child protection theory, modern juvenile justice theory, and restorative justice theory enables the identification of gaps between legal norms and practical implementation. Normatively, all three approaches have been incorporated into juvenile justice policy frameworks.

However, at the implementation level, a substantial gap persists between ideal principles and practical realities. This gap is reflected in proceduralized diversion practices, limited facilitator capacity, and insufficient community engagement in recovery processes. Accordingly, Kathleen Daly's scholarship and contemporary developments in restorative justice theory offer a robust conceptual foundation for understanding the complexity of juvenile recidivism prevention (Tietjen, 2025). When integrated with child protection theory and modern juvenile justice theory, restorative justice functions not merely as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism but as a strategic framework for constructing a more humane, responsive, and future-oriented juvenile criminal justice system. The integration of these three theories helps explain why the effectiveness of juvenile justice systems is highly dependent on implementation quality and the availability of supporting social structures.

In relation to the research problem formulation, these theoretical frameworks provide a conceptual basis for analyzing how restorative approaches are implemented within juvenile criminal justice systems and the extent to which they effectively prevent recidivism. The theories also support this study's objective of examining both policy effectiveness and practical implementation, as well as formulating recommendations for strengthening law enforcement capacity. Theoretically and academically, the integration of these frameworks enhances the study's contribution to the development of juvenile criminal law literature. Practically, this approach provides a conceptual foundation for strengthening community-based recovery mechanisms (Ilmi et al., 2023).

Based on the reviewed literature, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of restorative justice based juvenile criminal justice systems is significantly influenced by the alignment between child protection principles, modern juvenile justice design, and the quality of restorative justice implementation. The gap between normative frameworks and practical application emerges as a key factor explaining persistent risks of recidivism. The originality of this study lies in its integration of these three theoretical frameworks within an empirical analysis of law enforcement practices, particularly in examining how implementation gaps affect the prevention of juvenile recidivism.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study was designed to examine the effectiveness of a restorative justice based juvenile criminal justice system in preventing recidivism. Given that the research focuses on an in-depth understanding of law enforcement practices and the experiences of actors directly involved in the implementation of restorative approaches, a qualitative research method was adopted. The qualitative approach was selected because it enables the exploration of meanings, processes, and contextual implementation dynamics that cannot be fully captured through quantitative methods (Flick, 2025). In the context of juvenile justice, effectiveness is not measured solely by numerical indicators but also by the quality of recovery processes and post-resolution behavioral changes among children.

The research employed a qualitative design using an empirical socio-legal approach. This design allows for the systematic linkage between legal norms governing the juvenile criminal justice system and their actual implementation in practice. The socio-legal approach is considered particularly relevant, as the study does not confine itself to doctrinal legal analysis but also examines how restorative justice and diversion provisions are interpreted and applied by law enforcement actors. Through this approach, the research reveals gaps between normative policies and operational realities an issue that constitutes the central concern of this study in relation to juvenile recidivism prevention (Badley, 2024).

The research was conducted in Surakarta City, Central Java. The selection of this location was based on several methodological considerations. First, Surakarta is recognized as one of the regions actively implementing diversion policies within the juvenile criminal justice system, thereby providing a relevant empirical setting for assessing the effectiveness of restorative approaches. Second, the city offers adequate institutional access, including the police, public prosecution offices, district courts, and correctional centers responsible for handling juvenile cases. Third, the diverse social backgrounds of children in conflict with the law in this area enable the study to capture variations in practice and the challenges of implementing restorative justice in a comprehensive manner.

The object of this research encompasses the practical application of restorative approaches within the juvenile criminal justice system, particularly diversion mechanisms, as well as the role of law enforcement actors in preventing recidivism. The study focuses on the handling of juvenile cases from the investigation stage through post-resolution supervision, emphasizing the dynamics of diversion implementation and the sustainability of child recovery processes. Through this focus, the research

seeks to assess the extent to which restorative justice functions as an effective instrument for preventing repeat offending.

The subjects of this study consisted of informants selected through purposive sampling, based on their direct involvement in juvenile criminal case handling and the implementation of restorative approaches. Informant selection aimed to ensure that the data reflected actual practices of the juvenile justice system from multiple institutional perspectives. All informants possessed relevant professional experience and held strategic positions within the juvenile justice process, ranging from investigation, prosecution, and adjudication to post-resolution supervision and social reintegration.

The first informant was Drs. Arif Pratama, S.H., M.H., who serves as a Senior Investigator at the Women and Children Protection Unit (WCPU) of the Surakarta Police Department. With a legal education background and more than ten years of experience handling criminal cases involving children, this informant plays a crucial role in determining case trajectories at the early investigation stage, including assessing the eligibility of cases for diversion. His experience provides in-depth insight into the factual and normative considerations influencing investigators' decisions in implementing restorative approaches. The second informant was Rina Kurniasih, S.H., M.H., an Investigator at the Women and Children Protection Unit (WCPU) of the Surakarta Police Department. She is actively involved in facilitating diversion processes and coordinating with victims, children's families, and correctional counselors. Her perspective is essential for understanding the operational dynamics of diversion implementation, including communication challenges, time constraints, and administrative pressures that frequently affect the quality of restorative processes. She also offers critical reflections on the gap between the normative ideals of restorative justice and field-level practices. The third informant was Dedi Santoso, S.H., M.H., a Functional Prosecutor in the General Crimes Division of the Surakarta District Attorney's Office. He has experience handling juvenile cases at the prosecution stage and is directly involved in evaluating diversion outcomes conducted during the investigation phase. His role is important in assessing inter-institutional consistency in restorative justice implementation and in understanding how diversion policies are interpreted and operationalized within prosecutorial duties. The fourth informant was Sari Widyaningrum, S.H., M.H., a Juvenile Prosecutor at the Surakarta District Attorney's Office.

Specializing in juvenile criminal cases, she frequently participates in negotiation and oversight of restorative agreements. Her perspective sheds light on the challenges prosecutors face in balancing victims' interests, children's rights, and legal certainty. She also highlights differences in understanding among law enforcement actors regarding the scope and objectives of restorative approaches. The fifth informant was Hendra Wijaya, S.H., M.H., a Juvenile Judge at the Surakarta District Court (Class IA). As a juvenile judge, he is responsible for ensuring that judicial processes comply with the principle of the best interests of the child and applicable legal provisions. His judicial perspective is crucial for evaluating the extent to which diversion mechanisms and restorative justice practices are acknowledged, supervised, or limited within formal court proceedings. He also provides insights into the judiciary's role in either supporting or constraining restorative justice effectiveness (Mills & Rowe, 2025).

The sixth informant was Lina Nurhayati, S.Sos., M.Si., a Senior Correctional Counselor at the Class I Correctional Center (Bapas) of Surakarta. She has extensive experience in preparing social inquiry reports and supervising children during and after diversion processes. Her perspective is vital for assessing the sustainability of child recovery and the impact of restorative approaches on the risk of recidivism. She also emphasizes the importance of inter-agency coordination in supporting children's social reintegration.

The seventh informant was Andi Prasetyo, S.Sos., M.Si., a Correctional Counselor at the Class I Correctional Center of Surakarta. He is directly involved in supervising children with diverse case backgrounds. His role contributes data on variations in supervision strategies and structural constraints affecting recovery effectiveness. He also highlights human resource limitations and excessive workloads as factors that may hinder successful recidivism prevention. Continuing the description of research participants, the eighth informant was Maya Sulastri, S.Psi., M.Psi., Psychologist, who serves as a social worker and professional partner of the Surakarta Correctional Center (Bapas). She is involved in psychosocial assessments of children and family- and community-based reintegration programs. Her multidisciplinary perspective enriches the analysis, particularly in understanding non-legal factors

influencing the success of restorative approaches. She also emphasizes the critical role of social environment support in preventing children's re-involvement in criminal behavior.

To complement perspectives beyond the formal justice system, the ninth informant was a senior official from the local social services agency, referred to by the pseudonym "Rudi Hartono", who holds a leadership position in the child social rehabilitation division of the Surakarta Social Affairs Office. This informant was selected due to his role in formulating and implementing social protection programs for children in conflict with the law. His perspective provides insight into non-judicial policy support and cross-sectoral coordination challenges in sustaining restorative justice initiatives. The tenth informant was an independent diversion facilitator and consultant on juvenile restorative justice programs, identified by the pseudonym "Nina Agustina." This informant was chosen to offer a critical non-law-enforcement perspective on diversion and restorative justice practices. Her experience as a facilitator provides valuable insights into the quality of restorative processes, required professional competencies, and factors influencing the long-term sustainability of restorative agreements.

The selection of informants was purposively designed to obtain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of restorative justice implementation within the juvenile criminal justice system. The diversity of professional backgrounds, institutional positions, and practical experiences enabled the study to capture institutional dynamics, implementation gaps, and factors facilitating or constraining the effectiveness of recidivism prevention. Data obtained from these informants constituted the primary foundation for empirical analysis and policy-oriented recommendations grounded in field realities (Dicks, 2025). Data were collected through direct observation and in-depth interviews. Observations were conducted during juvenile court hearings and diversion sessions to examine interaction dynamics among stakeholders and the concrete application of restorative principles. In-depth interviews were carried out using a semi-structured format, allowing informants to articulate their experiences, perspectives, and evaluations of restorative justice effectiveness while maintaining alignment with the research focus (Hammersley, 2025). This technique was selected to balance flexibility with analytical rigor.

In addition to primary data, the study utilized secondary data sources, including legal documents, institutional reports, and case-handling archives related to juvenile justice. Secondary data were employed to contextualize findings, verify interview data, and strengthen analytical credibility (Haaker, 2025). The integration of primary and secondary data enhanced the comprehensiveness and robustness of the analysis. Data analysis was conducted using qualitative thematic analysis. Interview transcripts and observational notes were systematically transcribed, coded, and organized into themes relevant to the research objectives, such as diversion effectiveness, the role of law enforcement actors, and barriers to recidivism prevention. Analysis was performed iteratively by comparing findings across informants and linking empirical evidence to the theoretical framework. This process enabled the identification of patterns, divergences, and relationships between normative rules and practical implementation (Savin-Baden & Major, 2025).

To ensure data credibility and trustworthiness, the study employed source and method triangulation. Information obtained from one informant was cross-verified with data from other informants and supported by documentary evidence. In addition, limited member checking was conducted by reconfirming interpretive findings with selected informants to ensure accuracy and contextual alignment. These strategies conform to established qualitative research standards recognized in international academic journals. Conclusions were drawn inductively based on the results of thematic analysis. The process involved synthesizing key findings and systematically relating them to the research objectives and questions. This stage was conducted through careful reflection on the entirety of the data and research context, ensuring that conclusions accurately represent the effectiveness of restorative justice based juvenile criminal justice systems and the factors influencing juvenile recidivism prevention (Butarbutar, 2025).

Through this methodological approach, the study is expected to provide a strong empirical contribution to the development of juvenile criminal justice systems. The chosen methodology enables in-depth and contextual analysis, rendering the findings relevant for both theoretical advancement and practical policy formulation in the field of juvenile justice.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the effectiveness of a restorative justice based juvenile criminal justice system in preventing recidivism is highly dependent on the quality of policy implementation at each stage of case handling. Based on courtroom observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, the study reveals that diversion mechanisms, as the primary instrument of the restorative approach, are generally implemented in accordance with normative provisions. However, their effectiveness in preventing repeat offending among juveniles varies and is influenced by the level of engagement of law enforcement actors, the availability of institutional support, and the continuity of post-resolution supervision and assistance.

One of the principal issues identified in this study is the persistence of recidivism risk among children whose cases have been resolved through restorative approaches. From the perspective of child protection theory, this finding indicates that the protection provided by the justice system has not yet fully addressed children's developmental needs in a holistic manner. While diversion enables children to avoid formal punitive processes, it does not always ensure access to sufficient psychosocial support and a supportive environment capable of preventing reoffending. This suggests that procedural protection does not necessarily equate to substantive protection.

When examined through the lens of modern juvenile justice theory, the findings demonstrate that the rehabilitative objectives of the juvenile justice system have not been fully realized in practice. Although law enforcement institutions generally support the use of diversion, administrative pressures, heavy caseloads, and limited resources often affect the quality of restorative processes. Children are frequently positioned as policy subjects rather than as active participants in determining solutions to the conflicts they face. Such conditions may weaken the effectiveness of restorative approaches as instruments for recidivism prevention.

Within the framework of restorative justice theory, the implementation of restorative approaches tends to prioritize case settlement over the sustained restoration of social relationships. While diversion agreements are commonly achieved, monitoring mechanisms for their implementation remain limited. Several informants noted that intervention and supervision significantly decrease once restorative agreements are formalized. This diminishes the potential of restorative justice to cultivate accountability, awareness, and long-term behavioral change among children.

The findings also reveal a gap between legal norms and implementation practices in restorative justice. Normatively, the juvenile criminal justice system has embraced the principle of the best interests of the child and promotes case resolution through diversion. In practice, however, the application of these principles is not always consistent. This gap is reflected in varying approaches among law enforcement actors, limited inter-agency coordination, and a shortage of professionally competent restorative facilitators. From a child protection perspective, this disparity illustrates an imbalance between the state's obligation to protect children and the available institutional capacity to fulfill that obligation.

From the standpoint of modern juvenile justice theory, these implementation gaps indicate that the institutional design of the juvenile criminal justice system has not yet fully supported its rehabilitative objectives. Law enforcement practices remain heavily oriented toward procedural compliance and legal certainty, while restorative elements are often treated as supplementary. The study demonstrates that in certain cases, diversion is implemented more as an administrative requirement than as a participatory and meaningful restorative process. This condition undermines the system's potential to function as an effective mechanism for recidivism prevention.

Within the restorative justice framework, the gap between norms and practice highlights that the success of restorative approaches is contingent upon the quality of the process and the actors involved. Interview data indicate that the limited number of professional facilitators directly affects the depth of restorative dialogue and the sustainability of recovery efforts. In the absence of competent facilitators, restorative justice processes tend to become formalistic and fail to address the underlying causes of children's offending behavior, thereby limiting their effectiveness in preventing recidivism.

These findings directly address the research questions concerning how restorative approaches are implemented in the juvenile criminal justice system and the extent of their effectiveness in preventing recidivism. The results show that restorative approaches function relatively effectively during the initial stages, particularly in reaching diversion agreements. However, their effectiveness declines at the post-diversion stage due to limited mechanisms for supervision and continuous support. From the perspective

of child protection theory, this indicates that justice system interventions remain insufficiently oriented toward children's long-term needs.

From the perspective of modern juvenile justice theory, this study demonstrates that the juvenile criminal justice system remains in a transitional phase between retributive and rehabilitative paradigms. The success of diversion in reducing recidivism is highly dependent on inter-agency integration and consistent policy implementation. The findings suggest that when coordination is effective and continuous assistance is provided, the risk of juvenile recidivism tends to decrease significantly. Conversely, when restorative approaches are implemented in a fragmented or minimal manner, the likelihood of repeat offending remains high.

Within the framework of restorative justice theory, the findings affirm that restorative approaches possess substantial potential to prevent recidivism when implemented comprehensively and sustainably. Processes that actively involve children, victims, and community members are shown to be more effective in fostering accountability and social awareness among juvenile offenders. However, the study also indicates that without adequate structural and institutional support, this potential is difficult to realize optimally.

The findings of this study are consistent with the research objective, namely to analyze the effectiveness of a restorative justice based juvenile criminal justice system in preventing recidivism. In this context, the study reveals that restorative approaches demonstrate effectiveness at the procedural level but remain insufficiently effective at the substantive level. Limitations in human resources, particularly the shortage of professionally trained restorative facilitators, emerge as the primary factor hindering the optimal achievement of recidivism prevention goals.

In relation to the stated research contributions, these findings provide theoretical reinforcement for child protection theory, modern juvenile justice theory, and restorative justice theory in explaining the effectiveness of juvenile criminal justice systems. The study confirms that these theoretical frameworks cannot operate independently but must be integrated to adequately capture the complexity of juvenile recidivism prevention. From a child protection perspective, the findings highlight the importance of sustained and substantive protection beyond procedural safeguards. From the standpoint of modern juvenile justice theory, the results demonstrate the need for institutional design adjustments that more effectively support rehabilitative objectives. Meanwhile, restorative justice theory receives empirical validation as a relevant approach, albeit one that requires adequate implementation support to function effectively.

The academic contribution of this study lies in its provision of empirical evidence that enriches the literature on restorative justice effectiveness within juvenile criminal justice systems in developing country contexts. The findings offer a concrete depiction of implementation challenges that are often overlooked in normative or doctrinal legal analyses. From a practical perspective, the results may serve as a foundation for policymakers and law enforcement agencies in formulating capacity-building strategies, including the professional training of restorative facilitators and the strengthening of inter-agency coordination mechanisms.

Overall, the findings indicate that restorative justice based juvenile criminal justice systems possess significant potential to prevent recidivism; however, their effectiveness is highly contingent upon the quality of implementation. The integration of child protection principles, modern juvenile justice system design, and sustainable restorative justice practices emerges as a critical determinant in bridging the gap between normative ideals and practical realities. These findings provide a robust basis for advancing more effective, humane, and prevention-oriented juvenile justice policies and practices.

This discussion focuses on a critical interpretation of the empirical findings regarding the effectiveness of restorative justice based juvenile criminal justice systems in preventing recidivism. Rather than merely restating the results, the discussion situates these findings within the broader context of the research problem, implementation gaps, research questions, objectives, and theoretical as well as practical contributions (King, 2023). Through this approach, the discussion underscores the study's scientific contribution to the development of more recovery-oriented juvenile justice systems.

The central problem addressed in this research namely, the persistently high risk of juvenile recidivism can be understood as a reflection of the limited effectiveness of juvenile justice systems in practice. The findings demonstrate that although restorative approaches through diversion mechanisms are normatively implemented, the prevention of repeat offending remains suboptimal. This discussion emphasizes that juvenile recidivism should not be interpreted solely as an individual failure but rather

as an indication of systemic weaknesses in providing continuous protection and rehabilitation. In this context, the study shows that diversion processes frequently conclude with formal agreements that are not followed by systematic recovery mechanisms, resulting in temporary rather than sustained behavioral change (Joseph, 2025).

The linkage between the research problem and empirical findings further illustrates that the success of restorative approaches is fundamentally dependent on implementation quality. The study reveals that law enforcement actors often prioritize administrative case resolution due to procedural demands and institutional pressures (O'Mahony, 2023). Consequently, the substantive dimensions of restorative justice such as strengthening children's social responsibility and restoring relationships with victims and communities are not fully realized. This discussion highlights that restorative approaches risk losing their preventive capacity when narrowly understood as a formal alternative to punitive sanctions.

The implementation gap identified in the study namely, the discrepancy between legal norms and enforcement practices constitutes a central theme in the discussion. While regulatory frameworks clearly mandate the application of restorative justice and diversion mechanisms, practical implementation varies significantly across institutions and actors. These disparities are driven by limited human resources, insufficient specialized training, and weak cross-sectoral coordination. The discussion emphasizes that such gaps are not merely technical issues but reflect the incomplete internalization of restorative paradigms within law enforcement culture (Townend & Welsh, 2023).

When analyzed in relation to recidivism prevention, this implementation gap exerts a direct impact on outcomes. Children who experience comprehensive restorative processes combined with sustained support tend to demonstrate more positive behavioral changes. Conversely, children subject to formalistic diversion processes without follow-up assistance remain vulnerable to reoffending. This discussion underscores that the gap between norms and practice is deeply intertwined with the core rehabilitative function of juvenile justice systems.

The research questions focused on the implementation of restorative approaches and their effectiveness in preventing recidivism are addressed in greater depth through this discussion. Empirical findings demonstrate that restorative practices are generally effective at the initial stage, particularly in shielding children from formal criminal proceedings. However, the discussion highlights that long-term effectiveness in preventing recidivism has not been fully achieved due to limited post-diversion monitoring and assistance mechanisms.

Further discussion of the research questions reveals an imbalance in the roles of actors within the juvenile justice system. The study indicates that the contributions of correctional counselors and social workers are often constrained by excessive workloads and inadequate institutional support. This finding implies that recidivism prevention requires a more integrated cross-sectoral approach. Accordingly, this discussion interprets the effectiveness of restorative justice not merely as a function of legal process success but as dependent on the sustainability of social interventions following case resolution.

Finally, the research objective of analyzing the effectiveness of restorative justice based juvenile criminal justice systems can be considered partially achieved. The discussion confirms that restorative approaches hold substantial potential for recidivism prevention when implemented consistently and sustainably. However, it also reveals that this potential has not yet been fully realized due to structural and institutional constraints. Thus, the achievement of the research objective remains conditional, underscoring the importance of addressing supporting factors beyond normative legal frameworks.

In relation to the research objectives, this discussion underscores the critical importance of enhancing the capacity of law enforcement actors and restorative justice facilitators. The findings demonstrate that insufficient specialized competencies in facilitating restorative processes adversely affect the quality of dialogue and recovery outcomes. This discussion interprets capacity strengthening as a fundamental prerequisite for achieving effective juvenile recidivism prevention. Without adequately trained facilitators and enforcement personnel, restorative justice risks being reduced to a procedural formality rather than a transformative intervention.

The theoretical contribution of this study is reflected in its integration of empirical findings with the conceptual framework of the juvenile criminal justice system. The results provide evidence that restorative approaches cannot be separated from child protection principles and the rehabilitative objectives of juvenile justice. This discussion reinforces the argument that the effectiveness of juvenile justice systems should be assessed through indicators of behavioral change and social reintegration, rather than through case resolution alone. Consequently, the study contributes to theoretical

development by emphasizing the importance of aligning normative protection frameworks with empirical implementation dynamics (Nurhaqi, 2023).

From a practical perspective, the discussion highlights the direct implications of restorative approaches for law enforcement practices. The identified limitations in post-diversion assistance indicate the need to strengthen community-based recovery mechanisms. This discussion emphasizes that the practical value of the study lies in its provision of empirical foundations for designing policies that are more responsive to children's needs. Law enforcement agencies and policymakers may utilize these findings to develop more structured and sustainable models for implementing restorative justice, including formalized supervision and long-term support mechanisms.

The academic contribution of this research is also evident in its enrichment of legal and criminological literature on juvenile justice. This discussion demonstrates that the study offers an empirical account of localized implementation challenges, an area that has received limited attention in predominantly normative analyses. By linking empirical findings to policy and practice contexts, the research creates opportunities for more comprehensive and comparative future studies. Moreover, the study holds significant relevance for curriculum development and academic research in the fields of juvenile criminal law and criminal policy.

Overall, this discussion affirms that restorative justice based juvenile criminal justice systems possess substantial potential to prevent recidivism; however, their effectiveness is highly contingent upon implementation quality and institutional support. The interconnection between the core research problem, identified implementation gaps, research objectives, and theoretical as well as practical contributions underscores that restorative approaches must be understood as long-term processes involving multiple actors and social dimensions. This discussion strengthens the argument that successful juvenile recidivism prevention requires a paradigmatic shift in law enforcement from a predominantly procedural orientation toward a holistic and sustainable recovery-based approach.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that a restorative justice based juvenile criminal justice system constitutes a policy instrument that is normatively designed to protect the best interests of children while simultaneously preventing recidivism. Based on the research findings and discussion, restorative approaches particularly through diversion mechanisms have been implemented in law enforcement practice and have produced positive effects by diverting children from formal judicial processes that may generate stigma and negative psychosocial consequences. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of this approach in preventing repeat offending has not yet reached an optimal level and continues to face structural and institutional challenges.

The findings indicate that the persistently high risk of juvenile recidivism cannot be separated from limitations in the practical implementation of restorative approaches. Although diversion is procedurally conducted in accordance with regulatory requirements, the accompanying recovery processes tend to focus on short-term case resolution. These processes have not fully addressed the psychological, social, and environmental dimensions that are essential for sustainable behavioral change. Consequently, child protection within the juvenile justice system remains largely formalistic rather than genuinely transformative.

This conclusion is reinforced by the identified gap between legal norms and enforcement practices. While the regulatory framework provides a relatively strong foundation for restorative justice implementation, its application remains inconsistent across institutions and law enforcement actors. This gap is primarily attributable to limited human resources, the shortage of professionally trained restorative facilitators, and suboptimal cross-sectoral coordination between law enforcement agencies and social support institutions. As a result, restorative approaches are often implemented in an administrative manner, with insufficient depth in fostering social relationship repair and children's sense of responsibility.

In relation to the research questions, the study concludes that restorative approaches are relatively effective during the initial stages of case handling, particularly in diverting children from formal court proceedings. However, their effectiveness declines at the post-resolution stage due to weak monitoring mechanisms and inadequate ongoing support. This finding demonstrates that recidivism prevention cannot be achieved solely through restorative case settlement, but requires continuous and integrated interventions following diversion agreements.

The study further confirms that its research objective to analyze the effectiveness of restorative justice based juvenile criminal justice systems has been achieved. The findings identify restorative justice as a strategic approach with substantial potential to support child rehabilitation and prevent recidivism, provided that implementation quality is ensured. Restorative approaches are most effective when accompanied by intensive supervision, strong family involvement, and community support. Conversely, when implemented in a formalistic manner without adequate structural backing, their impact on recidivism prevention becomes limited.

The conclusions also emphasize that strengthening the capacity of law enforcement actors and supporting professionals is a key prerequisite for optimizing restorative justice implementation. Personnel equipped with adequate restorative competencies are more capable of facilitating meaningful dialogue and effective recovery processes. In contrast, insufficient knowledge and facilitation skills compromise the quality of restorative processes and weaken their potential to induce behavioral change among children.

Moreover, the study underscores that recidivism prevention requires a comprehensive and cross-sectoral approach. The juvenile criminal justice system cannot operate in isolation but must be integrated with social protection, educational, and family-based support systems. The findings reveal that insufficient post-case support particularly in the form of social assistance and community-based reintegration programs significantly undermines the effectiveness of restorative approaches. Therefore, the success of juvenile justice must be understood within a broader social context rather than solely through legal procedures.

From a theoretical perspective, this study affirms that the effectiveness of restorative justice can only be achieved through the integration of child protection principles, the rehabilitative objectives of modern juvenile justice, and the sustained practice of restorative justice. These three conceptual frameworks are complementary and inseparable in efforts to prevent juvenile recidivism. The study reinforces the argument that the success of juvenile justice systems should be measured by their impact on behavioral change and social reintegration, rather than by procedural case resolution alone.

Empirically, the conclusions demonstrate that restorative justice is a relevant and progressive policy instrument, although it has not yet been fully realized in line with its ideal objectives. The identified implementation challenges highlight the need for a paradigmatic transformation in law enforcement from a predominantly procedural orientation toward a holistic recovery-based approach. This transformation requires shifts in institutional perspectives, strengthened organizational capacity, and expanded community involvement in child recovery processes.

In conclusion, restorative justice based juvenile criminal justice systems play a crucial role in preventing recidivism; however, their effectiveness is highly dependent on alignment between legal norms, practical implementation, and social support structures. Restorative justice should not be treated merely as a procedural alternative to punishment, but as a long-term framework oriented toward recovery and children's future development. Strengthening the implementation of restorative approaches thus represents a strategic step toward realizing a more humane, just, and effective juvenile criminal justice system.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the study's conclusions, which indicate that restorative justice based juvenile criminal justice systems possess significant potential for recidivism prevention yet remain suboptimal in implementation, strategic measures are required to enhance the effectiveness of this approach. The recommendations presented in this study are formulated as a direct follow-up to the empirical findings and critical analysis discussed in the results and conclusions, emphasizing the need for improved policy implementation, institutional strengthening, and sustained child protection and recovery.

In line with the research findings, strengthening the capacity of law enforcement actors constitutes a primary recommendation for optimizing restorative justice implementation. The conclusions reveal that restorative approaches are still frequently applied in a formalistic and administratively oriented manner, thereby limiting their capacity to promote sustainable behavioral change among children. Accordingly, continuous and structured training programs are required, focusing on the philosophical foundations of restorative justice, the development of dialogue facilitation skills, and the ability to foster social relationship recovery processes. Integrating such training into human resource development systems within the police, prosecution services, courts, and correctional

institutions is essential to ensure that restorative justice is internalized as a paradigm of child case management rather than merely a regulatory obligation.

Beyond capacity building, this study recommends strengthening monitoring mechanisms and continuous post-diversion support for children. The findings demonstrate that restorative approaches tend to lose their preventive effect when they terminate at the agreement stage. Therefore, juvenile justice systems should be supported by operational procedures that guarantee sustained supervision and assistance by correctional counselors, social workers, and community partners. These support mechanisms must be systematically designed and adequately resourced to ensure that child recovery processes are durable rather than temporary.

The study also highlights the importance of reinforcing cross-sectoral coordination between law enforcement institutions and social service agencies. Recidivism prevention cannot be achieved through legal intervention alone but requires comprehensive social, educational, and family-based support. Consequently, restorative approaches should be integrated with social rehabilitation programs administered by local governments, social affairs offices, and community organizations. Effective cross-sectoral synergy is crucial to ensuring that children receive holistic support throughout reintegration and behavioral change processes.

To enhance the quality of restorative processes, this study further recommends increasing both the number and quality of professional restorative facilitators. The findings indicate that the limited availability of facilitators with specialized competencies is one of the key barriers to effective restorative justice implementation. Policies should therefore encourage the development, certification, and institutional recognition of restorative facilitators, whether within formal law enforcement structures or through partnerships with non-governmental organizations. Institutional acknowledgment of facilitators' roles is expected to improve the quality of dialogue, recovery, and children's accountability.

Furthermore, this study recommends the development of outcome-based evaluation policies for juvenile criminal justice systems. The conclusions underscore that system effectiveness should be assessed based on its impact on children's behavioral change and reductions in recidivism, rather than solely on the number of resolved cases. Accordingly, performance evaluation frameworks for law enforcement institutions should incorporate restorative success indicators, such as compliance with agreements, sustainability of social reintegration, and children's ability to avoid further involvement in criminal activity.

Consistent with the study's identified limitations, future research is also recommended. Subsequent studies should adopt mixed-methods approaches combining qualitative and quantitative data to provide a more comprehensive assessment of restorative justice effectiveness. Comparative research across regions or countries is likewise encouraged to identify best practices in implementing restorative justice based juvenile criminal justice systems, particularly within developing country contexts.

In conclusion, these recommendations emphasize that optimizing restorative justice based juvenile criminal justice systems requires coordinated, sustained, and cross-sectoral efforts. The recommendations directly respond to the study's conclusions and are intended to serve as a reference for policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and academics in developing juvenile justice systems that are more effective, humane, and oriented toward the prevention of recidivism.

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