

## A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN INDONESIA'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM: FROM PUNISHMENT TO RESTORATION

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### Article Info

#### **Keyword:**

Restorative Justice,  
Criminal Justice  
System,  
Legal Transformation

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### Abstract

This study aims to investigate how Indonesia's criminal justice system has changed from a retributive to a restorative justice paradigm. In particular, it examines how restorative justice has been integrated into the stages of investigation, prosecution, and trial, identifies the obstacles to its application, and assesses its viability as a long-term alternative to achieving substantive justice, legal certainty, and social reconciliation. This study employed the normative juridical method, which focuses on written laws and regulations that govern community life. Through laws such as Prosecutor's Regulation No. 15 of 2020 and the Supreme Court decision No. 1691/DJU/SK/PS.00/12/2020, the analysis reveals that Indonesia's regulatory structure supports restorative justice at three distinct levels: investigation, prosecution, and adjudication. Despite the lack of a statutory framework, there has been an operational shift towards restorative justice as evidenced by the more than 2,400 cases that have been settled utilising this legal paradigm as of 2023. A change in the law from a focus on retaliation to one of reconciliation is evident in the growing use of restorative justice. The absence of comprehensive legislation and conservative law enforcement cultures that prioritize positivist legal norms are two issues that still exist, nevertheless. Systemic changes, including public education, capacity building, and legislative support, are necessary for restorative justice to be long-lasting.

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Article history:

Received: January 20, 2024; Received in revised form: March 15, 2025; Available online: May 16, 2025.

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## Introduction

Since the inception of the Criminal Code, Indonesia has employed a retributive system in its criminal justice system. The retributive system emphasizes the concept of punishment as a tangible and definitive consequence that must be imposed upon the perpetrator of a crime (Arifin et al., 2023). This approach entails a dual focus: on the one hand, it directs attention toward the perpetrator, and on the other, it seeks to safeguard society by deterring criminal activity. The fundamental premise of the retributive system is that the objective of punishment is to ascribe moral culpability to the perpetrator for the crime committed (Waller, 2019). Furthermore, this system posits that there will be preventive, repressive, and educative impacts that can deter individuals from committing crimes, thereby enhancing community security. However, the retributive system is not without its own set of problems. The sanctions applied by the retributive system can foster other problems, such as economic problems, family problems, and community stigma, which can impede a person's ability to reintegrate into society after imprisonment (Hibrawan, 2023).

Subsequently, there was a gradual shift in the legal approach to criminal justice, moving away from a retributive model towards a more restorative form of justice. This is exemplified by Indonesia, which was an early signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This document contains policies that prioritize a child-friendly approach to justice. Subsequently, Indonesia enacted the Juvenile Justice System Act (Law No. 11 of 2012), followed by the Attorney General Regulation No. 15 of 2020, the Circular Letter of the Chief of Police of the Republic of Indonesia No. SE/8/VII/2018, and the Circular The Chief of Police of the Republic of Indonesia issued a letter (SE/8/VII/2018) and the Supreme Court issued a decree (No. 1691/DJU/SK/PS.00/12/2020) that represents a shift from a retributive criminal justice system to a restorative justice system (Setyowati, 2020).

Since the 1960s, the term "restorative justice" has been a relatively obscure concept, with only limited recognition in Indonesia. In some countries with more developed criminal justice systems, the merits of restorative justice are no longer a topic of debate among academics specializing in criminal law and criminology. Restorative justice has been implemented in conventional criminal justice processes in North America, Australia, and several countries in Europe, including procedures related to investigation, prosecution, adjudication, and execution (Chandra, 2023).

This study aims to investigate how Indonesia's criminal justice system has changed from a retributive to a restorative justice paradigm. In particular, it examines how restorative justice has been integrated into the stages of investigation, prosecution, and trial; it pinpoints the obstacles to its application; and it assesses its viability as a long-term substitute for attaining substantive justice, legal certainty, and social reconciliation. The Attorney General's Office of the Republic of Indonesia has initiated the implementation of the concept of restorative justice in ten High Prosecutors' Offices (Kejati) across the country. By 2023, the Attorney General's Office had recorded that over 2,407 cases in Indonesia had been resolved using the principle of restorative justice of 2,445 cases filed (*Sepanjang 2023, Kejaksaan Agung Eksekusi 99.224 Perkara, 2.407 Melalui Restorative Justice* | *tempo.co*, 2023).

Prior research has addressed the concept of restorative justice. For instance, Maria Silvya E Wangga's article, "Implementation of Restorative Justice in Criminal Cases in Indonesia," (Wangga, 2022) examines the potential applicability of the restorative justice model as a case

settlement in Indonesian society. Subsequently, research conducted by Sutomo in his article entitled "The Settlement of Crimes Out of Court (Restorative Justice)" (Sutomo, 2022), discusses the application of restorative justice in the criminal justice system in Indonesia. Additionally, Walim's review of the literature includes another research article entitled "The Concept of Restorative Justice in the Criminal Legal System: A Breakthrough in Legal Benefits" (Walim, 2024) offers an in-depth examination of the concept of restorative justice and its implications for the criminal legal system within the broader context of legal science.

In Indonesia, criminal cases that may be resolved through restorative justice include minor offenses outlined in Article 364, Article 373, Article 379, Article 384, Article 407, and Article 483 of the Criminal Code (KUHP). In this case, the applicable legal penalty is a maximum of three months imprisonment or a maximum fine of Rp. 2.5 million. In addition to minor crimes, restorative justice can be applied to other criminal cases, including juvenile crimes, crimes against women in conflict with the law, narcotics crimes, information and electronic transaction crimes, and traffic crimes (Alfarisi et al., 2024).

In cases of minor crimes regulated under Article 205 paragraph (1) of Law No. 8 of 1981 on Criminal Procedure, the concept of restorative justice applied in Articles 364, 373, 379, 384, 407, and 482 of the Criminal Code, must meet the conditions based on Attorney General Regulation No. 15 of 2020, namely: this crime is the first time it has been committed; the loss is not more than Rp 2.5 million; there is an agreement between the perpetrator and the victim; the crime is only punishable by a fine or imprisonment of not more than 5 years; the suspect returns the goods. 15 of 2020, namely: this criminal offense is the first time it has been committed; the loss is not more than IDR 2.5 million; there is an agreement between the perpetrator and the victim; the criminal offense is only punishable by a fine or imprisonment of not more than 5 years; the suspect returns the goods obtained from the criminal offense to the victim; the suspect compensates the victim; the suspect reimburses the costs incurred by the criminal offense and or repairs the damage caused by the criminal offense (Rahaditya et al., 2023).

## **Research Method**

This study employs a normative juridical research approach. The primary legal materials are the results of literature studies exploring the concept of restorative justice as a novel criminal justice system in Indonesia, as well as an analysis of the restorative justice system applied in criminal law. This research is focused on written laws and regulations based on the rules that apply in community life. Its objective is to ascertain a truth based on legal logic from a normative perspective. The data utilized in this research are derived from a literature study, which is a form of inquiry that involves examining written information on legal matters from a multitude of sources (Ali, 2016).

## **Results and Discussions**

### **A Model of Multistakeholder Resolution through Restorative Justice**

The evolution of criminal law has seen a shift in the conceptualization of crime, moving from a private or individual understanding to a public or social one. Historical records indicate that the majority of dispute resolution processes are based on the individual or victim's perspective. The restoration of rights is typically achieved through retaliation by the victim against the perpetrator of the crime. In the context of criminal law, an offense is regarded as a transgression against the state. This is evidenced by the majority of legal texts, including the

Mosaic Code (100 BC), Roman Law (450 BC), and numerous others (Abbott, 2022). A crime is defined as a violation of criminal law, which is regulated by the state. The defendant is prosecuted by the public prosecutor and the case is decided by the judge. As a result, the fulfillment of victims' rights is increasingly overlooked as the criminal settlement process is primarily oriented toward the perpetrator and the state (Rahmawati, 2022).

In general, for both misdemeanors and felonies, the resolution of criminal offenses is a constant and ongoing aspect of society. It is essential to consider various factors to facilitate the expeditious processing of cases at the court level, thereby avoiding a significant number of cases. Although initially perceived as a consequence of judicial leniency, the prevalence of minor offenses can now be viewed as a reflection of the necessity for expedient, straightforward, and cost-effective legal proceedings (Sulaiman, 2023).

John Braithwaite defines restorative justice as a legal model oriented towards realizing the values of justice and welfare, as well as elements of sanctions, to improve conditions, particularly economic ones (Braithwaite, 2020). This implies that aspects of justice can be achieved by prioritizing benefits. Meanwhile, Article 1, paragraph (1) of Prosecutor's Regulation No. 15 of 2020 concerning Termination of Prosecution Based on Restorative Justice elucidates the concept as a settlement of criminal cases involving perpetrators, victims, families of perpetrators/victims, and other related parties, who collectively seek a fair solution through a restoration to the original state, eschewing any form of retaliation (Huda, 2023).

Restorative justice emphasizes the recovery process and directs attention to the victim, the offender, the family of the offender or victim, and other relevant parties (Pemberton, 2019). Moreover, restorative justice represents a model of problem-solving that engages a diverse array of stakeholders, including victims, offenders, families, judicial institutions, and the broader community (Adebobola Omowon & Alaba Samson Kunlere, 2024). The foundation of restorative justice is the belief that the criminal act committed by the perpetrator not only violates the law but also affects the victim and the community. Consequently, any measures taken to address the consequences of criminal behavior must involve the offender as well as the affected parties. When feasible, these measures should also provide assistance and support to the offender and victims (Sulaiman, 2023).

The concept of restorative justice is closely linked to the practice of criminal mediation, as discussed in modern criminal law literature. Criminal mediation is also referred to as "*straf bemiddeling*" in Dutch, "*der Au Bergerichtliche Tatbestands-gleich*" in German, and "*de mediation penale*" in French, due to its role in facilitating peaceful dialogue between offenders and victims (Demjanick, 2020). On occasion, criminal mediation is also referred to as offender-victim mediation. As defined by Martin Wright, penal mediation is a process whereby offenders and victims of crime engage in direct or indirect communication with each other, with the assistance of a third party (Wright, 2019). This process enables offenders to acknowledge and assume accountability for their actions, while also providing victims with the opportunity to articulate their needs and emotions. Restorative justice has been the subject of considerable attention with regard to the transformation of the criminal justice system. However, it should be noted that this concept has not been subjected to detailed regulation in either the Criminal Code or the Criminal Procedure Code (Sulistyarini et al., 2023).

### **Indonesia's Restorative Justice Regulatory Development**

However, regulations on restorative justice have been accommodated at the level of investigation, prosecution, and judicial regulations in the criminal justice system. At the investigation level, restorative justice is regulated in Chief of Police Letter No.Pol.B/3022/XII/2009 dated December 4, 2009, concerning Case Handling through

Alternative Dispute Resolution. It was then followed up through a Letter from the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Agency of the Republic of Indonesia No. ST110/V/2011 dated May 11, 2011, on Guidelines for the Implementation of Alternative Dispute Resolution in the Criminal Investigation Agency of the Republic of Indonesia Police. At the prosecution level, the regulations are mentioned in the Prosecutor's Regulation No. 15 of 2020. At the court level, it is regulated in the Decree of the Director General of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia No.1691/DJU/PK.00/12/2020 concerning the Implementation of Guidelines for the Application of Restorative Justice (Wangga, 2022).

The evolution of the justice system has witnessed a shift from a retributive approach, which is punitive towards violations of the law, to a more progressive approach. Criminal law is now regarded not only as a means of retribution but also as a means of preventing crime in the present and future. In order to achieve the objectives of the law in the context of the rapid development of society, it is necessary to make adjustments to the legal system. It is insufficient for legal officers to prioritize legal certainty without also considering the implications of justice and legal benefits. The law is not merely a set of rules; it encompasses values and aspirations that society aspires to realize, which are not always constrained by legal regulations (Ramadhan et al., 2024).

In an ideal situation, law enforcement should be capable of upholding the principles of justice, expediency, and legal certainty. Nevertheless, there are a number of challenges that must be addressed without delay if restorative justice is to be implemented effectively, particularly for those working in law enforcement, including investigators. One such issue is that investigators may lack an understanding of the concept of restorative justice. Some investigators perceive restorative justice as a peacemaking endeavor, largely due to a lack of training in this area. Nevertheless, the implementation of restorative justice will require the fulfillment of several material and formal prerequisites. Moreover, a considerable number of investigators adhere to a conservative performance culture. This is primarily due to their adherence to a positivistic paradigm and the constraints imposed by a legalistic perspective (Pereira De Andrade & De Nardin Budó, 2023).

Conversely, justice is conceptualized as a collective resolution through the processes of healing and reconciliation. This represents a shift in the understanding of justice from a conventional perspective, which is concerned with the violation of norms that cause harm, to a focus on crimes against individuals. In this context, the infliction of pain as a form of punishment is no longer a relevant consideration; instead, the restoration of the harm experienced by the victim is of primary importance. In essence, the primary objective of restorative justice is to facilitate the restoration of harm (Sugio & Soponyono, 2024).

Restorative justice is considered a legal reform that aims to address dissatisfaction with the performance of the current criminal justice system. This method emphasizes the establishment of fairness and balance intending to achieve justice, certainty, and legal benefits. In this context, restorative justice is defined as a method of resolving criminal cases that involve offenders, victims, their families, and other relevant parties (Ginting et al., 2024). Restorative justice has been widely applied by legal officials and institutions, including the police, the prosecutor's office, and the judiciary. In instances where the perpetrator is genuinely motivated to provide compensation and assume responsibility for their actions towards the victim, restorative justice is employed. Furthermore, restorative justice is founded upon the foundation of retributive justice within the Indonesian justice system. This is corroborated by the observation that the crime rate continues to rise while the number of prisoners remains constant, which gives rise to the notion that retributive justice is no longer a viable approach (Nashir et al., 2024).

The main focus of criminal case resolution in restorative justice is restoration. Criminal cases, especially criminal acts or crimes are seen as the cause of loss/damage that needs to be repaired to achieve justice. This concept views that 'crime must have caused harm and repair of that harm is desirable'. However, the fact is that victims do not consider themselves as victims. The perpetrator does not make the victim feel that they have lost something. Instead, the perpetrator feels unfair because he is being apologized for something he did not do (Putri, 2022).

Restorative justice models, both traditional and contemporary, present several promising approaches to conflict resolution. In this model, individuals are directly engaged with the situation at hand, rather than maintaining a distance. The involvement of individuals in the process is now more tangible and immediate than ever before. If all parties are amenable to participation and possess the capacity to engage comprehensively and securely within the context of conversation and negotiation, this procedure is the optimal choice (Sari et al., 2022).

In contrast to retributive justice, which places an emphasis on punishment, restorative justice represents a significant departure from the prevailing approach to responding to criminal acts (Kelly, 2021). Restorative justice encompasses a range of practices that are oriented toward the restoration of harm in response to criminal acts (Kirkwood, 2022). Restorative justice is not primarily concerned with retribution; rather, it is focused on the well-being and dignity of those who have suffered harm. Restorative justice is predicated on the values of care and conversation, which facilitate dialogue about strategies for repairing harm. Restorative justice processes within the criminal justice system entail a diversion from the prosecution track. Diversion may entail a variety of models, including mediation processes that facilitate dialogue between all parties involved. Other alternative methods do not necessitate direct communication with the affected individual; instead, they rely on the establishment of community networks and the provision of support structures (Mason et al., 2024).

The Regulation of the Attorney General of the Republic of Indonesia Number 15 of 2020 on Termination of Prosecution Based on Restorative Justice describes the concept of restorative justice as a prosecutor's effort to ensure justice in law (Simbolon et al., 2022). This concept emphasizes substantial justice that is present and developed in society rather than only prioritizing procedural justice. This suggests that the purpose of the law is to provide happiness to as many people as possible, with a focus on the amount of happiness produced. Restorative Justice is basically simple, to encourage perpetrators, victims, families, and the community to correct violations of the law by using awareness as a foundation to improve community life. The theory of justice known as Restorative Justice emphasizes the recovery of losses caused by criminal offenses (Marshall, 2020).

The application of restorative justice is predicated on the understanding that criminal acts and offenses are fundamentally offenses against individuals or communities, rather than merely against the state (Amjad & Riaz, 2019). This approach culminates in agreements reached through restorative processes, which serve as a form of conflict resolution. Such agreements may include programs such as reparation, restitution, and community services, the objective of which is to meet individual and collective needs, as well as to fulfill the responsibilities of the various parties involved in order to facilitate the reintegration of victims and perpetrators (Walim, 2024).

The concept of restorative justice can be understood to consist of four stages: inclusion, encounter, redemption, and reintegration. It is recommended that interested parties accept the proposed approach and participate in the initial stage, which is the inclusion phase. In this phase, victims or their family members are allowed to engage in a dialogue with the offender regarding the ramifications of the criminal act and the means of rectifying it. In addition, there are three distinct conceptualizations of restorative justice. The transformative conception extends beyond

the encounter and reparation conceptions to emphasize an integral relationship with others and even with society. This conceptualization is often described as a "lifestyle of restorative justice" (Walgrave et al., 2021). However, defining restorative justice in practical terms is challenging due to its extensive scope, encompassing a multitude of actions across various stages of the criminal process. These include distinctions between prosecutions in court, actions taken after court decisions, and encounters between offenders and victims at each stage of the criminal process (Jamaludin & Ditia Saputra, 2023).

## Conclusion

The topic of restorative justice is a major concern when it comes to criminal case settlements in Indonesia. Regulating restorative justice is not covered by either the Criminal Procedure Code or the Criminal Code. Rather, law enforcement organizations inside the criminal justice system create the regulations that control this conduct. While the National Police Chief Number 15 of 2020 on Termination of Prosecution Based on Restorative Justice outlines the procedural aspects of restorative justice at the prosecutorial level, the National Police Chief Number 6 of 2019 on Criminal Investigation creates the regulatory framework for restorative justice at the investigative stage. A directive issued by court institutions is the Decree of the Director General of the General Justice Agency of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia Number 1691/DJU/SK/PS.00/12/2020 about Restorative Justice Guidelines. Instead of being incorporated into a full legal framework, the notion of restorative justice is applied in Indonesia through decrees. The regulatory structure is fundamentally weak in the absence of a thorough legal framework governing restorative justice. This is because, in line with the idea that the law is paramount, decrees, circulars, and memoranda of understanding are ranked lower in the legal hierarchy than laws.

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