



LEGAL PROTECTION OF JUVENILE OFFENDERS THROUGH DIVERSION, DEVELOPMENT, AND SOCIAL REINTEGRATION IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

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Abstract

This research discusses the legal protection of children as perpetrators of crime in the criminal justice system based on normative juridical approaches and empirical literature. It examines national legal arrangements, the use of diversion, correctional guidance, and social reintegration processes for post-criminal children. The results show Indonesian law requires special treatment and alternative resolution to prevent repetition of criminal acts and protect the children's rights and future. However, challenges such as stigma, unprepared human resources, limited facilities, and low public awareness hinder fair implementation. Cross-sector collaboration, including capacity building for officials, legal aid, and family and community involvement, is essential for effective reintegration. Child protection in the criminal justice system is not only a legal issue but also a long-term social investment that shapes the children. This study recommends the need for increased collaboration, regulatory oversight, and the development of innovative programs as a form of commitment from the state and all elements of society to ensure that children's rights are maintained until after the criminal period. Thus, the enforcement of justice for juvenile offenders is not only a normative slogan but is manifested in everyday reality.

Keywords: legal protection, juvenile justice system, diversion, development, social reintegration, children's rights, restorative justice.

Introduction

Modern civilization brings rapid changes in social interaction, accompanied by the emergence of various dynamics in people's behavior, including those under the age of majority. In daily social interactions, various aspects of technological development, information flow, and economic pressures become factors behind changes in behavior, including unlawful acts by children. Appreciation of children's progress is often hampered by the reality that many are still caught up in criminal cases in the midst of a complex society. As a result, the discourse around the legal protection of children involved in criminal cases has become increasingly important, along with international attention to the rights of children who are often violated.

In the criminal law system, the existence of children as perpetrators of crime requires a unique handling and is different from adults. The process of growth and development and the limitations of psychological and social aspects have the consequence that children who commit offenses have special characteristics that cannot be fully equated with adult offenders. Recognition of this uniqueness has given birth to a special judicial policy, as reflected in the Law on Juvenile Justice System which contains court mechanisms and the imposition of punishment according to the characteristics of children. This is a crucial part of efforts to uphold justice that respects children's human rights in the national legal system.

Various studies have highlighted that the rise of criminal cases involving children as perpetrators is inseparable from social, economic, family and environmental influences, which often interact in a complex manner. Social stigma and even discriminatory treatment in society aggravate the position of children in conflict with the law so that legal protection becomes indispensable. The state has a constitutional obligation to ensure that the rights of children at every stage of the judicial process are guaranteed. The existence of a legal protection system for children has become a legal mandate and moral identity of the nation that must be carried out consistently in national and international settings (Mulyati & Dahwir, 2022).

The position of children as perpetrators of crime raises its own challenges, especially in efforts to uphold justice. The process of examination, punishment, and guidance of children as criminal offenders

must be based on the principle of protection, both preventively and repressively. The challenge of managing juvenile criminal justice is inevitable, especially in an effort to provide guarantees of justice, fair settlement of cases, and adequate post-legal handling so that children are able to return to their social environment as a whole. The inclusion of children's rights in the criminal law system represents the nation's commitment to the welfare of the next generation.

A crucial problem in the implementation of legal protection for children as perpetrators of crime lies in the weak implementation of the principle of non-discrimination at every stage of the juvenile criminal justice process. Previous studies indicate that there are still repressive actions, even stigmatization experienced by children during the investigation, prosecution and trial processes, which of course tarnishes the principles of juvenile justice (Rahmatyar & Setiyono, 2020; Sinaga & Lubis, 2010). The rights to legal aid, humane treatment, and a child-friendly trial environment are still far from expectations as stipulated in the Juvenile Criminal Justice System Law (Widodo, 2016). In practice, many law enforcers have not fully implemented the principles of restorative justice, so that recovery for children are often neglected.

In addition, the system of guidance and social reintegration for children who have served their sentences is often ineffective in returning children to social life with equal status. Nevertheless, children's development institutions are still characterized by various shortcomings, ranging from facilities, human resources, to development programs that are not integrated with the education and social protection system. As a result, children who return to society tend to experience marginalization and are even prone to re-offending (Diaryudi, 2016; Eleanora & Masri, 2018). The lack of collaboration between stakeholders reinforces this obstacle, so that the protection and guidance of juvenile offenders has not been running synergistically.

Another problem is the non-uniform application of the diversion principle in the process of resolving juvenile criminal cases. In fact, according to Law No. 11/2012, diversion should be the main way to resolve cases before the formal court process (Krisnalita, 2019; Rahayu, 2015). Empirical facts show that there are still many law enforcement officials and communities who do not understand the meaning and

procedures of diversion, so that innovations in resolving children's cases tend to stagnate in the formalistic realm. The absence of a family approach (restorative) raises the risk of sentencing that does not consider the best interests of the child (Prema et al., 2020; Wijaya et al., 2022).

The fact that the perpetrators of crimes have not received a truly comprehensive and dignified form of protection demands the attention of all parties. The process of handling the law against children is often ineffective, and often presents disproportionate treatment in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. In fact, when referring to Law No. 11/2012, the state guarantees legal protection for children who commit crimes at all stages of the judicial process.

In addition, Law No. 11/2012 emphasizes the importance of the application of diversion during the process of resolving children's cases, namely the transformation of settlement from formal justice to family-based justice. Court procedures should be used as the last resort, not the main option, to avoid long-term effects that can damage the child's future. The reality of implementation in the field, the discord between norms and practices, increasingly demands systemic and continuous observations and academic studies of the process of legal protection of child offenders.

This study aims to identify and comprehensively describe the legal protection system for juvenile offenders in accordance with the principles of national law, analyze the implementation of the principle of diversion in the practice of resolving juvenile criminal cases, and examine the mechanism of guidance and social reintegration of children after serving their sentences in order to strengthen the basis of protection and fulfillment of children's rights in the midst of the tight criminal justice system. The results of this study are expected to contribute significantly to the development of child protection theory, policy recommendations, and juvenile criminal justice practices that prioritize the best interests of children.

Method

A qualitative approach in a normative juridical literature study was chosen as the methodology. It is used to explore the legal protection of children as perpetrators of crime. Qualitative methodology is also considered the most relevant in analyzing primary and secondary legal sources, including

laws and regulations, court decisions, scientific papers. By using a normative approach, it examines various aspects of the law in a systematic and structured manner, focusing on analyzing the content of regulations and their implementation, in order to obtain an objective picture of legal protection for children involved in criminal cases (Marzuki, 2010; Soekanto, 2007).

Data collection in this research comes from written source documentation that meets scientific validity criteria, such as legal journals, monographs, and laws and regulations. Data analysis was conducted in a qualitative-descriptive manner by focusing on the comparison between applicable legal norms and the reality of practice in the field (Darmawan, 2015). The description of the results was carried out by combining philosophical, normative and empirical approaches, so as to create solid arguments and become a trusted reference in the development of the discourse on legal protection of children in the national criminal system (Creswell, 2014).

Result and Discussion

Legal Protection of Juvenile Offenders

The increasing number of cases of child involvement in criminal offenses today is a serious concern, not only for law enforcement officials, but also in social issues and public policy. This reality demands the presence of a legal system that is able to respond holistically and sensitively to the needs of children as a group that is still in the developmental stage. In practice, children's involvement in criminal offenses is often triggered by an unfavorable environment, family absence, socio-economic pressures, and weaknesses in the education system. This fact shows that children who commit crimes are not only seen as lawbreakers, but also as victims of various social structures that fail to provide protection. Therefore, first of all, the best guidance is in the family environment which is very important for children because it is a place to shape children's personalities from an early age, with guidance carried out by parents, it is hoped that children will have good character (Chandra et al., 2020).

The situation faced by child offenders often puts them in a dilemmatic position. On the one hand, the law demands accountability for the offenses committed, while on the other hand, children as

perpetrators are still entitled to special protection due to their vulnerable characteristics. Various studies and policy analyses have confirmed that a solely repressive approach to handling child offenders often has a negative impact on their psychosocial development and future. This has prompted efforts to reform the justice system to not only provide a deterrent effect, but also prioritize the principles of recovery and social reintegration.

In the context of the implementation of the juvenile criminal justice system, Indonesia through its legislation has adopted a new paradigm that is more oriented towards the protection and best interests of children. The enactment of Law No. 11/2012 on the Juvenile Criminal Justice System is an important milestone that marks a change in approach from retributive to restorative. Special Criminal Justice system for children certainly has special goals for the future interests of children and society in which the principles of restorative justice are contained (Sofyan, 2020). Through mechanisms such as diversion, the state seeks to create a space for dialogue and mediation between the perpetrator, victim, family, and community as an integral part of a fairer and more humane case resolution process. Thus, children will be kept away from formal justice processes that are likely to neglect children's rights and traumatize children (Hasbi & Tarmudi, 2023).

The transformation of this approach requires the involvement of all elements, from law enforcement agencies, government, families, and the wider community. The success of legal protection efforts for juvenile offenders is greatly influenced by the level of implementation in the field, including the availability of facilities, the capacity of the apparatus, and public understanding of the urgency of the restorative approach. The biggest challenge lies in removing stigma, supporting the development process, and ensuring that children receive their full rights during and after the legal process.

The legal protection of child offenders has become a central theme in the discourse of human rights enforcement and juridical studies in Indonesia. When a child is involved in a criminal case, national legal instruments have established a number of regulatory frameworks to ensure they receive special treatment, taking into account psychological, social and educational aspects. According to Law No 11 of 2012 on the Juvenile Justice System, the legal protection of children is not just a formality, but a substantive and progressive imperative (Mulyati & Dahwir, 2022). This

justice system emphasizes a humane response, pays attention to the need for recovery, and avoids repressive approaches that have the potential to damage the character and future of children.

Children in conflict with the law essentially face the risk of stigmatization, social labeling, and even exclusion from their environment if legal protection is not implemented optimally. Widodo (2016) emphasized that legal protection needs to be implemented consistently through all stages of the legal process, from investigation to rehabilitation. In accountability through formal legal processes and diversion, they get the right to social rehabilitation, social rehabilitation is a process of refunctionalization and development to enable a person to be able to carry out his social functions reasonably in community life (Fadli & Afifah, 2022). One of the fundamental aspects is the guarantee of the right to legal aid from the beginning of the process, which involves the assistance of counselors, lawyers, and families. Empirical experience shows that inconsistencies in legal protection often lead to injustices that have an impact on the quality of life of children after undergoing criminal proceedings.

Legal norms provide strong legitimacy to the state's efforts to formulate special treatment for child offenders, but the implementation of norms still faces considerable challenges. Lalungkan (2015) points out that there are many cases where the treatment of child offenders is not in line with the values stated in the law, especially in humane treatment, access to legal aid, and guarantees of justice without discrimination. Many children only receive minimal services so that their rights as human beings do not develop optimally. This situation indicates a gap between the rules and practices in the community.

Efforts to provide comprehensive legal protection for children are also closely related to non-discriminatory treatment and the application of substantive justice principles that are rehabilitative, not retributive. Prabowo et al. (2024) revealed that the criminal system that refers to the restorative paradigm emphasizes protection, subsidiarity of imprisonment, and priority of out-of-court settlement. The development of restorative justice instruments increasingly fills the space for the need for fair and proper legal protection for children, while at the same time correcting the shortcomings of the conventional punishment system that tends to be harsh on children.

The legal protection of juvenile offenders is also accompanied by the diversion process, as the main step before the case is submitted to the general court stage. Pratama et al. (2022) emphasized that diversion plays an important role in reducing the negative impact of a formal and harsh justice system. The diversion process accommodates children's rights, family and community participation in resolving cases with a family spirit, and prioritizes the best interests of children. However, the implementation of diversion is often hampered by the lack of understanding of law enforcement officials, bureaucratic cultural resistance, and low public literacy of juvenile justice principles (Raharjo & Astuti, 2017; Rahayu, 2015).

International legal perspectives have also provided a clear foundation for the implementation of the protection of children in conflict with the law. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ratified through Presidential Decree Number 36 of 1990, requires all countries to take maximum protection measures, including preventing discrimination and ensuring children's rights are maintained while dealing with the justice system. Krisnalita (2019) mentioned that Indonesia has adjusted national regulations to harmonize with global norms, through affirming the principles of non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, and guarantees of justice in the legal process.

Various regulations at the national level, such as Law No. 35/2014 on Child Protection, affirm that children who have violated the law must be treated with full respect for their honor and dignity. These provisions include the right to live, develop, participate in the family and society, and receive protection from acts of violence or neglect. Haryono and Pritz (2016) state that this legal instrument is an important milestone in directing the justice system towards an approach that is more responsive to the needs and psychological dynamics of children.

The reality on the ground shows that many law enforcement officials are still based on a rigid paradigm of punishment, even though it is regulated in detail in Law No. 11/2012. In practice, children are still often subject to the same punishment as adult offenders, without considering aspects of their moral, psychological and sociological development. Eleanora and Masri (2018) emphasized the importance of evaluating and adjusting legal procedures so that child protection in the criminal justice process is truly effective and does not stop at the level of rhetoric.

Children's rights also include special treatment while in the institution and the right to proper social reintegration after serving a sentence. Diaryudi (2016) shows that ineffective social reintegration increases the risk of recidivism. The concept of social reintegration is not limited to returning children to the community, but must also guarantee access to education, psychosocial guidance, and guarantee the right to a decent life. There must be synergy between the government, the community, and social institutions as a bridge for the sustainability of child protection after the criminal process.

In the social construction of Indonesian society, the inclusion of children's rights in the criminal system is influenced by society's assessment of the legality and morality of children's actions. Strengthening legal literacy and developing support networks for children are crucial in eroding discrimination that tends to hinder the reintegration process. Sinaga and Lubis (2010) mentioned that legal protection for children must be pursued thoroughly with a multidisciplinary approach, ranging from the realm of law, education, to sociology.

The normative and empirical sides of child protection must always go hand in hand. Law No. 23 of 2002 as amended by Law No. 35 of 2014 explicitly provides for the protection of children's rights in the family, state and society at large. These rights should not be deprived by a legal system that still holds the traditional paradigm of punishment (Setiawan et al., 2020). The integration between legal norms and concrete implementation is the main instrument to strengthen the system of protecting children who commit crimes within the framework of the rule of law.

The policy of imposing punishment on children in conflict with the law shows a tendency to be detrimental to the mental development of children in the future (Setiawaty et al., 2020). Children according to positive law in Indonesia are immature individuals who do not yet have full legal independence. The definition of a child chronologically also varies according to the provisions of the applicable laws and regulations. In the national legal system, the age limit and status of children for legal protection purposes are regulated differently in each regulation and have the potential to cause ambiguous interpretations in practice. This necessitates the need to harmonize the understanding and application of children's legal policies to avoid bias in their treatment.

The state has built a child protection system through a series of regulations, from ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to specific regulations regarding the juvenile criminal justice system. However, the concept of legal protection has not been fully realized in practice. The ideal legal process does not necessarily guarantee the fulfillment of the rights of children as criminal offenders, so social supervision and enforcement of the principle of non-discrimination are very important to emphasize. Reflective and evaluative steps must continue to be taken periodically so that the protection system is not just harmonious on paper.

Legal protection of juvenile offenders is essentially a social investment for the sustainability of the nation's civilization. Fair and humane treatment shapes a new generation with good social and moral qualities, while discriminatory legal practices risk becoming a chain of long-term social problems. The substance of protection must be the spirit of the criminal justice system, not just legal accessories.

Implementation of Diversion in the Juvenile Justice System

The implementation of diversion in the juvenile criminal justice system in Indonesia is an effort to realize more humane justice and provide maximum protection to children involved in criminal cases. The principle of diversion emphasizes the settlement of cases outside the court with a dialogue and mediation approach involving children, families, victims, and the community. This provision is explicitly stated in Law No. 11/2012 which mandates diversion as the main stage before the formal justice process begins. This concept comes as a response to the psychological, social and future consequences of children who can be harmed if the case must proceed to a court verdict.

Although the provision of diversion is deeply rooted in the juvenile justice system, its implementation in the field does not always run smoothly. The mechanism for implementing diversion in the investigation stage of juvenile crime using the Restorative justice approach can be carried out through deliberation or mediation by emphasizing the restoration of the original state in resolving children's conflicts, this deliberative settlement will not be realized if there is no cooperation between victims, perpetrators of criminal acts, the community and

investigators (Witasari & Arif, 2019). Based on Krisnalita's (2019) findings, the diversion process encounters many obstacles in the aspect of understanding law enforcement officials and the community who still tend to view offenses by children as acts that must be punished strictly through repressive channels. Administrative constraints, lack of supporting facilities, and stakeholder resistance are dominant challenges that ultimately delay or even cancel the diversion procedure.

Rahayu (2015) points out that upholding the principle of diversion requires the active involvement of all parties, not only law enforcement, but also parents and the community. The low level of literacy among the community regarding the urgency of child protection has led to less than optimal acceptance of the diversion method. In a number of cases, diversion has not been used optimally so that children are still often processed like adult offenders. Through the Community Supervision Officer, BAPAS is not only an agency assigned to conduct community research related to children involved in criminal cases as previously regulated in the Juvenile Court Law, but through this SPPA Law, BAPAS is one of the important elements in the process of resolving criminal offenses committed or involving children (Krisnapati, 2021). Sinaga and Lubis (2010) added that the success of diversion cannot be separated from the capabilities of Bapas officers, the quality of mediation, and synchronization between the parties involved in the settlement process. Community Research made by Bapas Community Supervisors has the potential to be a great source of information that can be used by the Government and Local Governments to carry out prevention, handling, rehabilitation and reintegration programs for children by processing Litmas into a valid data source, because in good Litmas data processing, the factors of children committing crimes will be seen, the correlation between the child's family social relationship and criminal acts, and the effective criminal justice process can be seen if the data from Litmas is utilized massively and maximally through a separate data base system (Sartika et al., 2021).

The implementation of diversion is expected to foster a legal paradigm shift from a retributive model to a more restorative approach. Pratama et al. (2022) emphasized that the success of diversion should be measured by the establishment of effective communication between

victims, offenders, families, and communities, as well as the growth of a sense of social empathy and responsibility. The concept of restorative justice that encourages healing and recovery is the main foundation for diversion in juvenile criminal justice, so that punishment is not just retribution but preventive and rehabilitative efforts that can change children's behavior.

Widodo's research (2016) explains that in addition to legal substance aspects, institutional factors also determine the effectiveness of diversion implementation. There are still overlapping authorities, unintegrated procedural operational standards, and limited counseling service facilities, so that the implementation of diversion sometimes runs stagnant and unproductive. The human resources aspect, which should be the motor of the implementation of diversion, is still often characterized by limited capacity and sensitivity to children's rights values.

From a normative juridical perspective, the success rate of diversion can be evaluated through indicators of a decrease in the number of children processed through the court, the level of victim satisfaction, and the social reintegration of children after case settlement. Eleanora and Masri (2018) in their research show that a diversion-based approach is more effective in preventing social stigma and reducing recidivism rates compared to conventional repressive-based punishment models. The diversion model is not only a solution to case settlement, but also a protector for the future of children.

The reality in the field also shows that the non-uniform implementation of diversion is often influenced by differences in perceptions between officials, differences in regional conditions, and low levels of coordination between related institutions. Most regions with limited facilities often avoid diversion because it is considered an additional administrative burden (Wijaya et al., 2022). As a result, not all juvenile offenders can enjoy their right to receive treatment in accordance with the principles of justice and child protection.

Diversion should ideally be used as the main law, not the exception, in handling children's cases in court. The government should increase training and capacity building for legal apparatus, so that all stakeholders can apply the principle of diversion in line with the objectives of child protection. According to Reza and Siregar (2023), many children's cases

end up in conventional punishment due to the absence of technical tools for implementing diversion or because the authorities have a rigid perception of the purpose of juvenile punishment.

The diversion approach in the juvenile justice system must reflect a commitment to the fundamental principles of human rights, recognition of children's psychological development, and provision of humane treatment within the national legal framework. The effectiveness of diversion is assessed not simply by the closure of legal proceedings, but by the extent to which children receive comprehensive protection in legal, social, and psychological dimensions. Children cannot be regarded solely as recipients of legal sanctions; they must be regarded as individuals whose rights warrant the highest level of attention and advocacy throughout the process. To fulfill this imperative, every stage of diversion requires procedures designed to promote emotional stability, personal accountability, and opportunities for constructive engagement with society. The involvement of well-trained professionals is crucial to facilitate impartial decision-making that genuinely prioritizes the unique circumstances of each child. Collaborative efforts among legal authorities, social workers, and educational practitioners can create a synergistic environment that strengthens the outcomes of diversion initiatives. Periodic assessments and transparent reporting systems foster a culture of accountability, resulting in ongoing improvements to diversion protocols. Educational interventions integrated into diversion programs increase the prospects for future reintegration and skill development, enabling children to actively contribute to society after resolution of their cases. Establishing societal trust in the diversion model is essential to eliminate stigmatization and foster broader acceptance of restorative approaches in juvenile justice.

To realize the ideal diversion system, cross-sector collaboration is needed. The government, judicial institutions, communities, and educators must work together to facilitate a just diversion process. Guarantees of legal certainty, psychosocial assistance, and education on restorative justice need to be continuously improved so that the principle of diversion can be a real solution for the legal protection of children as perpetrators of crime.

The implementation of diversion requires continuous evaluation in order to adapt to the challenges of globalization and changes in the social

structure of society. The juvenile criminal justice system is expected to embody substantive justice, wherein dialogue and restorative measures serve as the foundation of law enforcement while upholding the principles that safeguard children's rights. Diversion emerges as a pivotal measure in reforming national legal frameworks, prioritizing the best interests of children throughout each phase of juvenile criminal proceedings. Effective diversion strategies promote rehabilitation over punishment, facilitating the gradual reintegration of children into society in a manner that emphasizes personal growth and accountability. The active involvement of community stakeholders enhances the effectiveness of diversion programs by ensuring multi-layered support tailored to individual needs. Ongoing capacity-building for all professionals within the justice system further guarantees consistency in the application of diversion mechanisms. Regular data-driven monitoring tools are essential to assess the long-term impact and sustainability of diversion outcomes. Strengthening cross-sectoral partnerships between legal, social, and educational institutions maximizes resource allocation and improves service delivery for affected juveniles. Lastly, fostering societal awareness regarding the objectives and benefits of diversion can mitigate prejudice, thereby advancing a more inclusive and progressive approach to juvenile justice.

Development and Social Reintegration of Post-Criminal Children

Development and social reintegration for children who have completed the criminal period is one of the main pillars in the legal protection and fulfillment of children's rights in Indonesia. After undergoing the punishment process, children should not be released into the community without being equipped with adequate skills and support to avoid repetition of criminal acts. The development of juvenile offenders in the Special Development Institute for Children should be a concern for the Government of Indonesia because the conditions found at the post-adjudication stage, juvenile offenders placed in the Special Development Institute for Children are very concerning (Darwanta, 2020). According to Diaryudi (2016), a structured coaching system in juvenile correctional institutions must be designed based on psychological, educational, and social needs, so that children are able to transform into productive, integrated, and responsible individuals.

The coaching process in juvenile correctional institutions is not limited to emphasizing aspects of discipline and compliance with rules, but also focuses on empowering and restoring children's character. Eleanora and Masri (2018) argued that comprehensive guidance programs, such as skills training, psychosocial rehabilitation, and spiritual assistance, are instrumental in strengthening self-confidence and opening opportunities for effective social reintegration. The availability of competent human resources, adequate facilities, and the active role of coaches and counselors are crucial factors that influence the success of post-criminal child development.

The successful reintegration of children into society depends on the synergy between stakeholders, especially the family, school environment, and social institutions. Diaryudi (2016) highlights that, in practice, children who have completed the prison period are still often faced with the problem of stigmatization and social rejection. Therefore, strengthening social networks, forming support communities, and public education campaigns in the environment around children are strategic steps so that the reintegration process does not run discriminatively. This multi-faceted handling is vital so that children can truly live a normal life, get the right to education, and have the opportunity to work properly.

The formation of an attitude of independence and responsibility in children after leaving the coaching institution can be obtained through activities oriented towards the development of life skills. This approach also equips children with the social capital and work skills needed in real-world competition. The government, together with non-formal education institutions and businesses, can play a facilitating role so that children have opportunities for economic rehabilitation as well as new constructive social networks. At the regulatory level, Law No. 11/2012 mandates that social reintegration is part of the legal protection that must be fulfilled by the state.

The protection of children's post-criminal rights includes access to education services, psychosocial rehabilitation support, and protection from all forms of violence and discrimination. The role of this special correctional institution for children is to promote, protect, educate and counsel so that child prisoners can be accepted by their families and communities after serving their sentences and can easily rejoin and be

accepted back into their environment (Putra & Subroto, 2021). Sinaga and Lubis (2010) state that the effectiveness of reintegration can only be realized if the protection approach is carried out in a sustainable manner while children undergo the adaptation process in their new social environment. In this case, periodic monitoring and evaluation is an important instrument to ensure that children receive assistance that truly functions to protect and develop their potential.

The implementation of children's social reintegration also needs to pay attention to diverse individual needs, because the background, causes, and types of offenses committed by each child are very different. Adjusting the pattern of coaching and strengthening the support system is needed so that social intervention runs effectively. Rahayu (2015) emphasized the need for collaboration between counselors, teachers, law enforcement, and the community in guarding and facilitating reintegration without stigmatization. Family support is the main foundation, while the community must be encouraged to foster an inclusive attitude and understanding based on restorative justice.

Obstacles in building a quality guidance and social reintegration system still often occur, especially related to the readiness of the family and the living environment, the limitations of post-correctional programs, and the lack of sustainable psychosocial assistance. Widodo (2016) found that it is not uncommon for children who have been released from punishment to return to face mental pressure and strong economic challenges, so the state is required to be able to develop post-correctional programs that are truly inclusive and adaptive.

The legal perspective confirms that every child deprived of liberty is entitled to humane treatment, to be separated from adults, and to proportional legal assistance and social services (Prema et al., 2020). This principle is an integral part of the implementation of human rights and social reintegration goals that are oriented towards recovery rather than retribution. Guidance and social reintegration serve as a bridge between the legal process and the reality of children's lives after passing the criminal period, as well as an effort to prevent the recurrence of legal violations.

The main challenge of reintegration lies in ensuring the safeguarding of the right to education, access to mental health services, and opportunities for participation in community life without discrimination.

When protective mechanisms function efficiently, the state, the family, and society collectively contribute to fostering improved character development among children after involvement in criminal activities. Another essential element of reintegration is the establishment of an environment that fosters belonging, affirming that children are valued members of society and empowering them to achieve their fullest developmental potential. Reintegration programs must also address potential vulnerabilities by creating structured support networks that anticipate the unique needs of each child. Targeted interventions can bridge service gaps, facilitating continuous access to educational, psychological, and social resources. Strong legal frameworks and transparent policies further reinforce the consistency of support, ensuring that every child receives equitable treatment during the reintegration process. Collaboration among multidisciplinary teams enhances the capacity to address complex issues that may hinder successful reintegration. Finally, systematic public awareness campaigns can reduce societal stigma, promoting greater acceptance and actively supporting the sustainable inclusion of post-criminal children into mainstream society.

The balance between legal protection and the application of adaptive coaching is a fundamental strategy. Often, an overly normative approach causes children to distance themselves and feel alienated in the post-correctional social environment. Therefore, the integration of coaching, education, and social support programs must be designed systematically, measurable, and based on empirical evaluation results in the field.

The efforts of the state and society in ensuring the success of children's social development and reintegration are not just administrative tasks, but part of a collective responsibility to prepare a generation that is free of stigma, has self-confidence, and relevant life skills. Cross-sector collaboration is a necessity so that children as perpetrators of crime really have the opportunity to build a productive and meaningful future.

Conclusion

Legal protection for children as perpetrators of crime has been comprehensively regulated in the national legislation system that emphasizes humanist, restorative, and non-discriminatory approaches. Prevention efforts, settlement through diversion, special treatment during

the judicial process, as well as post-criminal guidance and social reintegration illustrate the state's commitment to guaranteeing children's rights to grow and develop, despite having faced criminal law. Implementation in the field still faces a number of challenges in the form of social stigma, limited understanding of the authorities, and uneven supporting resources, resulting in a gap between regulations and real practices. However, with policy harmonization, strengthening social networks, and cross-sector collaboration, the legal protection system for child offenders can continue to be improved so that their rights are guaranteed until the social reintegration process.

The phenomenon of children in conflict with the law requires an improvement in the quality of a sustainable system of guidance and social reintegration based on the principle of protecting children's rights. This has an impact on changing the paradigm of punishment in the national legal system from a retributive orientation to a restorative direction that favors the recovery and character building of children. The successful implementation of child legal protection not only provides a guarantee of justice, but also creates an inclusive social environment, encouraging the growth of a more adaptive generation while preventing recidivism. The broader implication is the creation of synergy between officials, families, social institutions, and the community in breaking the chain of child criminality and strengthening the social fabric of the nation.

It is necessary to strengthen the implementation of the principle of diversion and comprehensive guidance in the juvenile criminal justice system, by increasing the capacity of apparatus resources, expanding access to legal aid services, and increasing public literacy related to child protection. The government and all relevant parties are obliged to create derivative regulations and special programs that ensure children do not experience discrimination and can participate socially after punishment, with the support of consistent monitoring and evaluation. It is also important to improve cross-sector collaboration through multi-stakeholder synergy so that the process of reintegrating children runs effectively and sustainably, so that the quality of legal protection of children who commit crimes is truly realized in practice, not just as a normative discourse.

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