

The Development of the Restorative Justice Concept as an Alternative Approach to Handling Drug Abuse Cases Among Teenagers (a Study at Labuhanbatu Police Resort)

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ABSTRACT

Drug abuse among teenagers is a serious issue that requires long-term solutions. The traditional repressive legal approach often proves ineffective, as offenders tend to relapse after serving their sentences. Restorative law offers a more humane alternative, emphasizing the recovery of victims and the reintegration of offenders into society. In Indonesia, this approach is supported by regulations such as the 2014 Joint Regulation and the 2020 Prosecutor's Regulation No. 15. Research at the Labuhanbatu Police Resort shows the application of restorative justice in handling drug abuse cases among teenagers, with a focus on rehabilitation.

INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse is one of the serious problems faced by many countries, including Indonesia (Firmansyah & Babussalam, 2023). This phenomenon not only harms the individuals involved but also has a wide-reaching impact on families and society. Among teenagers, drug abuse is of particular concern because adolescence is a critical period in the transition from childhood to adulthood (Jamal et al., 2023). Teenagers involved in drug abuse often face a variety of problems, including physical health issues, mental and emotional health challenges, academic performance, social behavior, family relationships, involvement in criminal activities, as well as dependency and life trajectory struggles (Yusuf, 2024).

Factors such as peer pressure, high curiosity, and an unstable family environment often serve as triggers for drug abuse among teenagers (Aridho et al., 2024). The legal approach that has been commonly applied in handling drug abuse cases tends to be repressive and focuses on enforcing legal sanctions against the offenders (Kadek Arya Putra Gunawan & I Nyoman Bagiastra, 2024). Although this approach aims to provide a deterrent effect, it often fails to offer a long-term, effective solution. Many offenders, after serving their sentences, fall back into drug abuse, indicating that the repressive approach has not been able to address the root causes of the problem. Moreover, this approach often neglects the recovery aspects for both the victims and offenders, as well as the psychological impacts involved.

The repressive legal approach, which focuses on punishing offenders, frequently overlooks other important aspects such as rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders into society. Drug abuse offenders, especially teenagers, need comprehensive support to recover and function optimally within the community. Without adequate rehabilitation efforts, offenders are likely to repeat the same mistakes after being released from prison. This not only harms the offenders themselves but also adds to the burden on the judicial system and society as a whole.

The restorative justice approach offers a more humane and recovery-oriented alternative, emphasizing the restoration of relationships between the offender, the victim, and the community. It also focuses on rehabilitating the offender so they can function optimally within society again (Priskila Ginting et al., 2024). In the context of drug abuse, the victims include not only individuals directly affected but also families and society at large. The restorative justice approach requires the participation of all parties involved-offender, victim, and community-to create a better understanding and comprehensive solutions. The primary goal is the reintegration of offenders into society, allowing drug abusers to function optimally and avoid relapsing into drug use.

In Indonesia, drug abuse is addressed through various regulations, particularly Law No. 35 of 2009 on Narcotics, which serves as the main legal foundation. This law governs a range of aspects, from prevention and eradication to rehabilitation for drug users. Additionally, Government Regulation No. 25 of 2011 on the Mandatory Reporting of Narcotics Addicts

provides a legal basis for the rehabilitation of drug addicts, requiring them to report themselves and undergo designated rehabilitation programs.

Considering these regulations, a more comprehensive and recovery-focused legal approach is essential. Such an approach would not only help offenders recover and reintegrate into society but also reduce the burden on the judicial system and offer a more effective long-term solution for addressing drug abuse issues among teenagers.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is an approach to resolving criminal cases that emphasizes resolution through familial or community-based methods, with the aim of achieving balanced justice for the offender, the victim, and other affected parties. This approach also seeks to prevent the emergence of negative stigma and to reduce the burden of the increasing accumulation of criminal cases, which has been significantly rising over time (Tambun & MuhammadRustamaj, 2023). This theory serves to analyze the challenges of implementation, such as resource readiness and institutional coordination, and provides recommendations for optimizing its application.

Legal protection

Legal protection is a guarantee provided by the law to every citizen to ensure that their rights are recognized, respected, and fulfilled. It encompasses protection against various forms of violations such as criminal acts, abuse of power, discrimination, and violations of civil and political rights (Jerimas Pelokilla, 2023; Prayoga et al., 2023). The theory of legal protection supports the development of the restorative concept as an alternative for handling drug abuse cases among teenagers, emphasizing the offender's right to receive rehabilitation rather than mere punishment. This approach ensures balanced justice for the offender, the victim, and society, while also reducing social stigma.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study method to gain an in-depth understanding of the application of restorative law in handling drug abuse cases among teenagers at the Labuhanbatu Police Resort. A legislative approach and a case approach are used to analyze the development of the restorative law concept as an alternative for addressing these cases, particularly through the analysis of relevant regulations. The data sources consist of primary data, obtained through in-depth interviews with key informants, and secondary data, which involve the interpretation of various relevant legal regulations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Development of Restorative Law Implementation in Indonesia's Criminal Justice System

Restorative justice holds strong relevance in the context of legal enforcement injustices in Indonesia, often described by the phrase “sharp downward, dull upward,” in the enforcement of criminal law (Aspan et al., 2024). In this context, the lower class tends to receive harsher punishments compared to those in power. This approach offers an alternative that focuses more on recovery and rehabilitation rather than repressive punishment. Restorative justice involves the offender, the victim, and the community in the resolution process, aiming to restore social relationships and provide the offender with an opportunity to make amends for their wrongdoing.

The application of restorative justice offers an alternative to the cultural approach of law within society and law enforcement, emphasizing resolution between the offender and the victim within the context of social relationships, rather than directing the offender to government authorities. This contrasts with the retributive approach, which focuses solely on punishing the offender (Syahrin, 2018). Countries such as the Netherlands, the United States, Japan, and South Korea have successfully implemented restorative justice through various approaches. In the Netherlands, restorative mediation helps offenders and victims address trauma and build mutual understanding. In the United States, Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM) allows victims to meet directly with offenders to express the impact of the crime, a practice adopted by over 300 communities. Japan and South Korea emphasize acknowledgment, repentance, and forgiveness, which have contributed to a reduction in crime rates through the restorative justice approach (Syahrin, 2018).

In the context of Indonesia, the implementation of restorative justice is considered relevant to the local legal culture, which emphasizes deliberation and consensus, as reflected in the values of Pancasila and customary law (*adat law*) (Chandra, 2014). In the reform of national criminal law, there has been an effort to accommodate the principles of restorative justice, as seen in various provisions within Law No. 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code. Previously, the development of restorative law implementation in Indonesia's criminal justice system had made progress, such as with the issuance of the Chief of Police Circular No. 8/VII/2018 on July 27, 2018, regarding the Application of Restorative Justice in Criminal Case Resolution. This circular serves as a legal basis and guideline for police investigators and officers in conducting investigations and inquiries, while also providing legal protection and oversight in the application of restorative justice principles. Its goal is to achieve the public interest and societal sense of justice, as well as to ensure uniform understanding and implementation of restorative justice within the police force (Indha Auliya Rahayu, Sufirman Rahman, 2022).

As evidenced by research conducted by Indha Auliya Rahayu on the implementation of restorative justice at the Makassar Metropolitan Police, there has been a decrease in the percentage of criminal case resolutions through restorative justice, from 78.3% in 2019 to 68.6% in 2021, with an average of 74.5% over those three years. This trend may indicate obstacles in the

application of this method that require further evaluation. Interviews with 20 respondents regarding the effectiveness of restorative justice revealed that 55% considered the approach to be less effective, while 30% found it effective, and 15% deemed it ineffective. These results reflect a level of public dissatisfaction with the implementation of restorative justice at the Makassar Metropolitan Police (Indha Auliya Rahayu, Sufirman Rahman, 2022).

The ineffectiveness of restorative justice implementation in Indonesia faces various challenges, including a patriarchal culture that conflicts with human rights, the limited understanding of restorative justice (RJ) as merely a dispute resolution tool, the absence of implementing regulations, and the inconsistent understanding among law enforcement officials. Additionally, weak inter-institutional coordination, diversion being limited to criminal threats, and minimal efforts to avoid detention and imprisonment further hinder the effectiveness of restorative justice (Rahmawati et al., 2022).

The implementation of restorative justice in Indonesia's criminal justice system has been further strengthened with the enactment of Law No. 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code (*New KUHP*). This law emphasizes that criminal punishment is not the primary means of addressing crime, but rather serves as an *ultimum remedium*, or last resort, when other methods have failed. Restorative justice is regulated within the new Criminal Code to ensure that this approach can be applied to various criminal acts, as long as they meet the formal and material requirements stipulated in Police Regulation No. 8 of 2021 (Adrianto, 2023).

Although the new Criminal Code provides a solid foundation for the implementation of restorative justice, challenges in its application persist. One of the main challenges is ensuring that these principles are consistently applied throughout the criminal justice system. Article 54 of the Criminal Code, for example, requires judges to consider relevant factors such as the offender's motives, the impact on the victim, and the offender's personal circumstances before imposing a sentence (Yahya & Saravistha, 2025).

Overall, the implementation of restorative justice in Indonesia not only reflects a commitment to victim recovery and offender rehabilitation but also integrates more humane justice values that align with local culture. Despite facing various challenges, including cultural, legal, and practical obstacles, with proper support from various stakeholders, restorative justice holds great potential to become a key element in the reform of Indonesia's criminal justice system.

The Concept of Restorative Justice Law Applied in Handling Drug Abuse Cases Among Teenagers at Labuhanbatu Police Resort

Narcotics users are guaranteed medical and social rehabilitation under Article 4(d) and Article 54 of the Narcotics Law, which mandates that addicts and victims of drug abuse undergo rehabilitation. However, Article 127 also stipulates criminal sanctions for narcotics users, leading to a situation where, in practice, individuals using narcotics for personal consumption—who are not involved in trafficking—are often still subjected to legal prosecution and face

imprisonment. Users who are initially victims and should be rehabilitated instead find themselves facing criminal penalties and are charged with overlapping provisions, such as Articles 111, 112, or 114, which cover actions like purchasing, possessing, storing, or controlling narcotics (Pakpahan, 2014).

Although narcotics users for personal consumption are often subject to criminal penalties under Article 127 of the Narcotics Law, the opportunity to apply the concept of restorative justice in handling drug abuse cases among teenagers brings significant changes to the legal approach. This shift emphasizes rehabilitation and recovery rather than punishment, aligning with the broader goals of restorative justice to address the root causes of drug abuse and reintegrate offenders into society.

The table presented below provides an overview of the opportunities for applying restorative justice for narcotics users at each stage of the judicial process. Restorative justice, which focuses on rehabilitation and reintegration rather than punitive punishment, becomes an important alternative in handling narcotics user cases. Through this table, we can understand the likelihood of this approach being adopted at various stages of the judicial process, from the investigation phase to the court's decision, as well as the factors that influence these decisions.

Table: Opportunities for Restorative Justice for Narcotics Users at Each Stage of the Judicial Process.

No	Condition of the Suspect/Defendant					Investigation	Prosecution	Court Hearing
	Evidence	Gramatur		Urine				
		Lower Limit	Upper Limit	+	-			
1	X			V		Placed in a rehabilitation institution. No investigation conducted.		
2	V	V		V		Investigation continues (SE Bareskrim). Can be placed in a rehabilitation institution.	Article 127 must be applied. Can undergo rehabilitation during the legal process in accordance with the Prosecutor's Guidelines No. 18/2021.	Based on Article 103, rehabilitation can be decided. Requirements: Positive Lab Test. Doctor's statement appointed by the judge.
3	V		V	V		Detained but can still receive treatment and care for rehabilitation purposes. Investigation continues, and rehabilitation rights are still granted based on TAT recommendations.	Classified as a dealer, distributor, courier, or producer, but still possible to apply Article 127.	
4	V	V			V	Can be placed in a Rehabilitation Institution.	To apply Article 127.	
Narcotics addicts and victims of drug abuse participating in the IPWL (SE Bareskrim).							Placed in a Rehabilitation Institution.	No investigation conducted.

Source: Maidina Rahmawati and others, *Peluang Dan Tantangan Penerapan Restorative Justice Dalam Sistem Peradilan Pidana Di Indonesia* (Jakarta Selatan, October 2022).

The opportunity for the implementation of Restorative Justice (RJ) in handling narcotics abuse cases provides several strategic steps that law enforcement officers can take at each stage of the investigation to support the rehabilitation of offenders. First, at the investigation stage, investigators have the authority to coordinate with the Integrated Assessment Team (TAT) to produce rehabilitation recommendations. This allows for a more humane approach, focusing on recovery rather than merely retributive law enforcement (Rahmawati et al., 2022). This coordination is crucial to ensure that eligible offenders can promptly gain access to appropriate rehabilitation.

Furthermore, during the prosecution stage, the public prosecutor can continue coordinating with the Integrated Assessment Team (TAT) to ensure that the rehabilitation recommendations are included in the indictment. With the issuance of Prosecutor's Guidelines Number 18 of 2021, public prosecutors can even designate rehabilitation as part of the case resolution without having to pursue criminal penalties, which reflects the implementation of the prosecutor's *Dominus Litis* principle (Rahmawati et al., 2022). This demonstrates flexibility within the legal system, allowing rehabilitation to be implemented as early as the prosecution stage, even if no formal charges are pursued.

The public prosecutor also has the option to draft an indictment plan by applying Article 14a in conjunction with Article 14c of the Criminal Code, which allows for rehabilitation of eligible narcotics offenders. This reflects a legal sensitivity towards the offender's condition, where rehabilitation is prioritized over imprisonment, in line with the principles of restorative justice. The use of these articles demonstrates that criminal law does not always have to result in incarceration but can also be aimed at rehabilitating the offender.

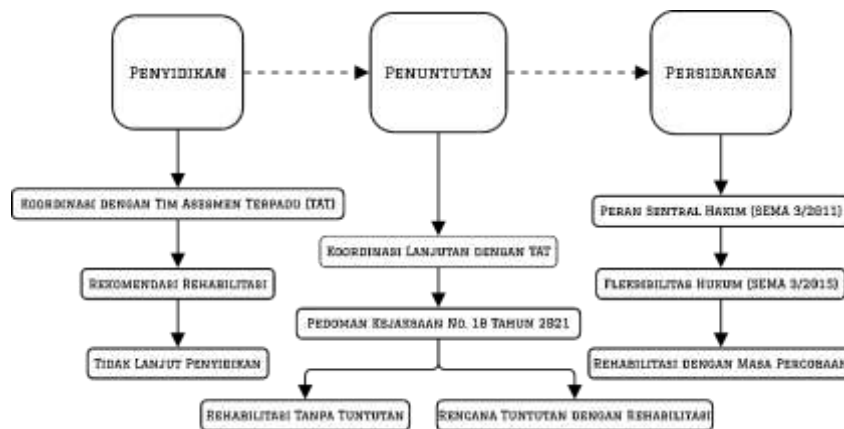


Diagram: Opportunities for Restorative Justice for Narcotics Users at Each Stage of Judicial Proceedings.

Source: adopsi dari Maidina Rahmawati and others, *Peluang Dan Tantangan Penerapan Restorative Justice Dalam Sistem Peradilan Pidana Di Indonesia* (Jakarta Selatan, October 2022).

At the trial stage, the judge plays a central role in ensuring that the defendant's right to rehabilitation is fulfilled. According to Supreme Court

Circular (SEMA) No. 3/2011, judges are expected to proactively ensure that these rights are upheld from the beginning of the legal process. Furthermore, based on SEMA No. 3 of 2015, judges are not bound by the specific minimum sentences stipulated in the Narcotics Law. If, after examination, the judge deems the defendant more suitable for rehabilitation rather than imprisonment, the judge may invoke Article 14a in conjunction with Article 14c of the Criminal Code to order rehabilitation within the framework of a conditional sentence with a probation period (Rahmawati et al., 2022). This affirms the flexibility and humanism in law enforcement, where judges may deviate from specific minimum provisions to provide rehabilitation for defendants in need.

The application of the restorative justice concept in handling drug abuse cases among teenagers reflects a paradigm shift in the criminal justice approach. Instead of focusing on retributive punishment, this approach emphasizes the recovery of the offenders' physical, mental, and social conditions. This is clearly demonstrated in the 2014 Joint Regulation, which mandates that narcotics addicts or victims of drug abuse undergo rehabilitation at rehabilitation institutions (Sinaga, 2021). The Joint Regulation has altered the investigation process for narcotics addicts and users. These individuals will undergo an integrated assessment conducted by a team of doctors, psychologists, and legal representatives from the National Police, National Narcotics Agency (BNN), Prosecutor's Office, and the Ministry of Law and Human Rights (Krisnawati, D dan Utami, 2015).

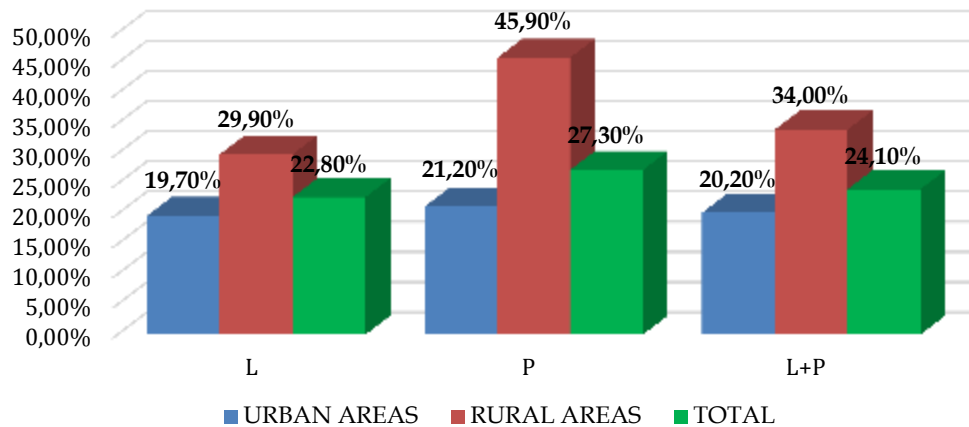
Furthermore, Indonesian National Police Regulation No. 8 of 2021 strengthens the implementation of restorative justice, particularly in resolving cases involving juveniles. This regulation outlines procedures for resolving criminal offenses through a restorative approach at the investigation level, aiming to prevent negative stigmatization of offenders and prioritize rehabilitation without the need to wait for a court ruling (Dewi, 2023).

In addition, the importance of this approach becomes increasingly evident when we consider the vulnerability of adolescents as a group in need of special protection. Adolescents, particularly those involved in drug abuse cases, are not only viewed as offenders but also as victims who require rehabilitation. Rehabilitation helps narcotics users break free from addiction and lead drug-free lives, which is considered more effective than imprisonment. Prisons are currently overcapacity, with 50% of inmates being related to drug cases (Almond & Zulfa, 2022). Furthermore, rehabilitation is intended to help drug abusers, categorized as addicts, to break free from their dependency. The resolution of criminal cases related to narcotics abuse through rehabilitation is carried out by prioritizing restorative justice and utility (*doelmatigheid*) (Hasibuan et al., 2023).

This research uses the term "adolescents" as the object of study, even though Indonesian law does not categorize a specific legal status for adolescents, but rather distinguishes between the legal status of children and adults. However, in the context of narcotics offenses, it is deemed necessary to categorize adolescents based on social, medical, and psychological phenomena, as previously described.

Quoting the definition of adolescence from (Mercurio et al., 2020), adolescents are defined as individuals aged between 13 and 18 years. The selection of adolescents as the object of this research is also based on the view of Mercurio et al. (2020), which states that risk-taking behavior is more common during adolescence, and violations of social norms and rules typically peak between the ages of 17 and 19 (Mercurio et al., 2020). Moreover, adolescents are still in a developmental stage.

Based on data cited from the Indonesia Drug Report 2024. Jakarta: National Narcotics Agency of the Republic of Indonesia. 2024, the age group of 15-24 years is one of the groups vulnerable to drug abuse, with variations in prevalence based on gender and region of residence. Data from 2023 shows significant differences in drug abuse patterns among adolescents and young adults, which can be measured by the percentage of users based on demographic factors. This situation provides an important overview for understanding the dynamics of drug use in this critical age group, as well as how gender and living environment contribute to the level of abuse.



Graph. Age Group 15-24 Years Drug Abuse in 2023 by Gender and Region of Residence (%)

Source: Dwi Sulistyorini, Indonesia Drug Report 2024. Jakarta: Badan Narkotika Nasional Republik Indonesia. 2024, p. 39.

The data reveals significant differences in gender distribution between urban and rural areas. In urban areas, the percentage of females (21.20%) is slightly higher than males (19.70%), indicating a relatively small gap between the two genders in this region. However, in rural areas, there is a much more striking difference, with females comprising 45.90% of the population, while males account for only 29.90%. This indicates that in rural areas, females have a much more dominant representation compared to males (Sulistyorini et al., 2024).

Overall, when combining both urban and rural areas, females still have a higher percentage (27.30%) compared to males (22.80%). The total percentage covering both areas (M+F) shows that the population in rural areas (34.00%) is overall larger compared to urban areas (20.20%). This indicates that rural areas have a larger population, with a stronger concentration of females, compared to urban areas. This analysis is important for understanding the population

dynamics based on gender and location, which can influence development policies and planning in both regions (Sulistiyorini et al., 2024).

Table. Number of Drug Case Suspects by Age Group 2024

No.	Age Group	Number of Suspects		Total
		POLRI	BNN	
1	< 15 Years	189	5	194
2	16-20 Years	2,686	57	2,743

Source: Polri dan BNN, Maret 2024, dikutip dari Dwi Sulistiyorini, Indonesia Drug Report 2024. Jakarta: Badan Narkotika Nasional Republik Indonesia. 2024, p. 148

Based on the 2024 data on the number of drug case suspects categorized by age, two main categories are identified: suspects under the age of 15 and suspects aged 16-20. In the under-15 age group, the total number of suspects reached 194, consisting of 189 males and 5 females. Meanwhile, in the 16-20 age group, the number of suspects is significantly higher, totaling 2,743, with 2,686 males and 57 females (Sulistiyorini et al., 2024).

This data indicates that the 16-20 age group dominates the number of drug case suspects in 2024, suggesting that late adolescence to early adulthood is the most vulnerable group for involvement in drug-related cases. The significant difference in the number of suspects between these two age groups also highlights the greater challenge in addressing drug abuse among adolescents and young adults. This understanding is crucial for designing more targeted interventions in drug prevention and rehabilitation efforts, especially for the more vulnerable age groups.

Table. Drug-Affected Areas in Labuhan Batu Regency in 2023

Village/Subdistrict	Kategori	Village/Subdistrict	Kategori
Desa Perkebunan Afdeling III Rantau Prapat	Alert	Desa Sei Nahodaris	Alert
Desa Tebing Linggahara Baru	Alert	Desa Selat Beting	Alert
Desa Negeri Lama Seberang	Alert	Desa Perkebunan Pangkatan	Alert
Desa Perkebunan Negeri Lama	Alert	Desa Sennah	Alert
Kelurahan Lingga Tiga	Alert	Desa Tanjung Harapan	Alert
Kel. N4/Empat Aek Nabara	Alert	Kel. Lobu Sona	Alert
Desa Pematang Siang (Seleng)	Alert	Kel. Pardamean	Alert
Desa S3/Enam Aek Nabara	Alert	Kel. Padang Matinggi	Alert
Desa Sei Lumut	Alert	Kel. Siringo-Ringo	Alert
Desa Sei Sanggul	Alert	Kel. Padang Bulan	Danger
Desa Ajamu	Alert	Kel. Sirandorung.	Alert
Desa Sei Sentosa	Alert	Kel. Bina Raya	Alert
Desa Bagan Bilah	Alert	Kel. Aek Paing	Danger

Source: Dwi Sulistiyorini, Indonesia Drug Report 2024. Jakarta: Badan Narkotika Nasional Republik Indonesia. 2024. p. 63.

Based on the 2023 data from Labuhan Batu Regency, several villages and subdistricts have been categorized as drug-prone areas. Most of the listed areas fall under the "Alert" category, indicating serious concerns about the spread of drugs in these regions, although the situation may not yet have reached the most critical level. Some of the villages included in this category are Perkebunan Afdeling III Rantau Prapat Village, Tebing Linggahara Baru

Village, Negeri Lama Seberang Village, along with several others, including Lingga Tiga Subdistrict and Pardamean Subdistrict.

However, among these areas, two subdistricts have been given the “Danger” status: Padang Bulan Subdistrict and Aek Paing Subdistrict. This category signifies that the drug problem in these two subdistricts has reached a more critical level, requiring more urgent attention and action. Overall, this data indicates that Labuhan Batu Regency faces significant challenges in controlling the spread of drugs, particularly in areas categorized under the “Alert” and “Danger” statuses (Sulistiyorini et al., 2024).

In 2022, the Labuhanbatu Police demonstrated a commitment to a humane approach in addressing drug abuse issues by facilitating the rehabilitation of 27 addicts through collaboration with BRSKPN “Insyaf” Medan (Pencawan, 2022). This approach is part of a national policy that prioritizes rehabilitation over punishment, aiming to support individual recovery and reduce the burden on the criminal justice system, particularly in overcrowded correctional facilities. It also reflects an understanding that addiction is a health issue requiring medical and psychosocial interventions, aligning with the principles of restorative justice, which focus on recovery and social reintegration.

Furthermore, in 2023, the Berkah Primary Clinic of the National Narcotics Agency (BNN) in North Labuhanbatu Regency enhanced its rehabilitation efforts by providing outpatient services to 80 drug addicts and post-rehabilitation support to 10 clients, emphasizing the importance of continuous support to prevent relapse. In addition, an integrated assessment conducted for 104 individuals demonstrated a more personalized and targeted approach, ensuring that each individual's rehabilitation needs were met (UTARA, 2023). This comprehensive approach marks a significant step forward in effectively addressing drug abuse, with a focus not only on short-term recovery but also on long-term reintegration into society.

Previously, in 2021, the Labuhanbatu Police Resort (*Polres*) received recognition from the North Sumatra Regional Police (*Polda*) for successfully implementing a restorative justice approach in handling drug-related offenses by applying the sole Article 127 to six suspects and facilitating rehabilitation for sixty-nine victims (Nababan, 2021). This approach not only alleviated the burden on the judicial system by reducing the number of cases brought to court, but also highlighted the focus on individual recovery as an integral part of a more humane law enforcement effort.

The evaluation of the effectiveness of access to justice for marginalized communities, including in the context of handling drug abuse cases among adolescents, highlights the importance of reducing physical and financial barriers and enhancing legal education. Efforts such as subsidized legal fees and improved access to transportation have proven to enhance access to the justice system. In the application of restorative justice, legal education and accessible, affordable legal aid services play a crucial role in helping adolescent offenders understand their rights and effectively undergo the rehabilitation process. Challenges such as limited literacy and social stigma still need to be addressed, making the role of the government, NGOs, and the private sector in

providing support essential for the long-term success of the restorative approach (Aspan, 2024).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The development of restorative justice implementation within Indonesia's criminal justice system reflects a significant transformation from a retributive approach to one that focuses more on recovery and rehabilitation, representing efforts to create a more holistic form of justice. Restorative justice in Indonesia has been increasingly strengthened by various initiatives, such as its incorporation in the new Criminal Code (*KUHP*) and regulatory support from various legal institutions. Although challenges remain in harmonizing it with the formal legal system and in societal acceptance, the application of restorative justice principles is expected to become the main framework for resolving criminal offenses more effectively, justly, and in alignment with local values, as well as helping to reduce crime rates sustainably.

The application of restorative justice in handling drug abuse cases among adolescents in the Labuhanbatu Police Resort demonstrates a significant shift in the criminal justice approach, focusing more on recovery than punishment. This approach emphasizes the physical, mental, and social rehabilitation of offenders, with the aim of preventing recidivism and reintegrating drug users into society. Existing regulations, such as the 2014 Joint Regulation and Prosecutor's Regulation No. 15 of 2020, strengthen these efforts by providing a legal framework that allows for the termination of prosecution based on restorative justice, though certain exceptions still apply to narcotics offenses. Overall, despite the challenges in its implementation, the restorative justice approach is expected to mitigate the negative impacts of the traditional criminal justice system and provide a more holistic and humane solution for adolescents involved in drug-related cases.

FUTURE STUDY

Research the potential for restorative justice to prevent future drug abuse, focusing on early intervention programs for at-risk adolescents and their families. This could include evaluating school-based programs, family counseling, and community awareness initiatives aimed at preventing drug abuse before it leads to legal involvement.

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