

The Application of Restorative Justice in Violence Against Children in Schools Cimarga Banten

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the gap between normative recognition and operational implementation of restorative justice in addressing violence against children in Indonesian educational settings. It focuses on three issues: the legal position of restorative justice, its application in the SMAN 1 Cimarga case, and the need for normative reconstruction to ensure legal certainty and child protection. Using a normative legal approach with statutory, case, conceptual, and comparative analyses, the study finds that although restorative justice is supported by Law No. 11 of 2012 and Law No. 35 of 2014, its implementation remains weak. Institutional barriers include fragmented regulations, lack of clear procedures, and ambiguous authority. The Cimarga case reflects a dominant retributive approach that neglects dialogue and victim recovery. The study concludes that reconstruction is required through integrated regulation, school-based mechanisms, and stronger institutional accountability, including regulatory revision, restorative units in schools, and improved inter-agency coordination.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56442/ijble.v7i1.1429>

Keywords:

Restorative Justice;
Child Protection;
Educational Law;
Legal Certainty;
Institutional
Accountability

INTRODUCTION

Parents serve as the primary communicators who convey values, norms, and expectations to their children. This process directly shapes a child's self-concept and identity, including how the child understands themselves in a social context (Indriastuti et al., 2020). Teachers are responsible for creating a learning environment that enables students to develop cognitively, emotionally, and socially. In the digital context, teachers serve as facilitators who guide students to learn independently, think critically, and collaborate. This means that students' well-being is fostered not only through academic understanding but also through learning experiences that are relevant, interactive, and non-stressful (Brumadyadisty et al., 2025).

The phenomenon of violence against children in educational settings highlights a structural tension between a repressive legal approach and the need for justice that prioritizes the best interests of the child. Empirical studies indicate that responses to violence in schools remain dominated by formal legal mechanisms focused on punishment, often neglecting aspects of victim recovery and the reconstruction of social relationships (Anyon, 2022). In this context, retributive approaches tend to exacerbate the psychological impact on victims, including the risk of secondary trauma, and fail to foster constructive accountability on the part of the perpetrator (Gaffney et al., 2021; Morrison & Vaandering, 2022).

Indonesia has formally adopted the principles of restorative justice through its juvenile criminal justice system, which emphasizes diversion and restorative-based resolutions. However, the implementation of these principles in the educational context remains limited. The literature indicates that one of the main obstacles lies in regulatory fragmentation and a lack of integration between child protection policies,

the criminal justice system, and educational governance (Hopkins & al., 2023; Lloyd & Hopkins, 2022). This lack of alignment makes it difficult to operationalize restorative approaches in cases of school violence, even though they have been normatively recognized.

Theoretically, restorative justice emphasizes healing, dialogue, and the reconstruction of social relationships as the core of the justice process (Zehr, 2015; expanded within a contemporary framework (Van Ness & Strong, 2022). This approach aligns with the principle of the best interests of the child, which forms the foundation of global child protection law, as affirmed in various recent studies on child-centered justice (Daly, 2022a; Liefwaard & Sloth-Nielsen, 2023). However, in practice, the dominance of formal legalistic approaches often overlooks this dimension, thereby creating procedural ambiguities and normative inconsistencies in the handling of violence in educational settings.

Given these conditions, this study stems from the need to bridge the gap between norms and practice. Restorative justice is positioned as a systemic approach that must be integrated into the existing legal framework, not merely as an alternative. This approach is considered capable of providing a balance between accountability, victim restoration, and institutional responsibility, as recommended in the global literature on restorative justice in the educational context (González, 2023; Wachtel, 2021).

This study focuses on three main legal questions. First, what is the position of restorative justice within the legal framework of child protection and educational regulations in Indonesia, particularly in cases of violence occurring within the school environment?

Second, what are the legal and procedural implications of applying or not applying restorative justice in the case of violence at SMAN 1 Cimarga, Banten?

Third, what kind of normative reconstruction is needed to align the handling of cases of violence against children in schools with the principles of restorative justice, without neglecting legal certainty and institutional accountability?

These questions are designed to critically evaluate existing normative structures and implementation practices, with a focus on harmonizing legal doctrine with child-centered justice.

This study has four interrelated main objectives. It aims to analyze the legal basis for the application of restorative justice in cases of violence against children in school settings based on positive law in Indonesia, including the interplay between Law No. 11 of 2012, Law No. 35 of 2014, and Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 82 of 2015.

This study also aims to assess whether the SMAN 1 Cimarga case can be resolved through restorative justice mechanisms, taking into account legal and procedural feasibility as well as the characteristics of the actions involved.

Furthermore, this study aims to identify normative gaps and regulatory inconsistencies that hinder the implementation of restorative justice in educational settings, particularly in the context of power relations between teachers and students.

Finally, this study aims to formulate a normative legal model that integrates the principles of restorative justice with educational accountability, so that victim protection and institutional responsibility can be balanced.

This study employs a multidimensional theoretical framework to analyze the intersection of law, education, and child protection. Restorative Justice Theory, pioneered by Howard Zehr, serves as the primary foundation for this analysis, positioning justice as a process of healing through dialogue, accountability, and community engagement, thereby challenging the dominance of retributive approaches focused on punishment (Daly, 2022b; Morrison & Vaandering, 2022; Van Ness & Strong, 2022). This approach is further reinforced in contemporary literature, which demonstrates that restorative justice can achieve more effective relational and psychological restoration compared to conventional penal approaches (González, 2023; Hopkins & al., 2023).

The Theory of Legal Protection, which emphasizes the protection of vulnerable groups, particularly children aligns with global developments in child protection studies that position the state and institutions as primary actors in ensuring children's safety and well-being (Liefgaard & Sloth-Nielsen, 2023; Lundy, 2022). In this context, legal protection is not only repressive but also preventive and rehabilitative.

The *child-centered jurisprudence* approach emphasizes that every legal interpretation must prioritize the best interests of the child, as underscored by the evolving concept of *child-friendly justice*, which requires the legal system to comprehensively consider the psychological, social, and developmental aspects of the child (Daly, 2022b; Liefgaard & Sloth-Nielsen, 2023). This approach shifts the legal orientation from procedural compliance toward substantive justice focused on the child's well-being.

The concept of institutional accountability in law is used to assess the responsibility of schools as institutions that have a legal obligation to prevent, address, and mitigate the effects of violence. Recent literature indicates that the failure of educational institutions to fulfill these obligations contributes to the reproduction of structural violence and weak victim protection (Anyon, 2022; Lloyd & Hopkins, 2022). Therefore, institutional accountability is a key element in child-protection-oriented educational governance reform.

Progressive Legal Theory provides a critical foundation for normative reconstruction by emphasizing that law must be oriented toward substantive justice and humanistic values, not merely procedural formalities. This perspective aligns with global trends in legal scholarship that advocate for flexibility in legal interpretation to achieve more contextual justice responsive to social needs (McCrudden, 2022; Smits, 2022). Thus, the integration of restorative justice, child protection, and progressive law constitutes a relevant approach to addressing the complexity of violence cases within educational settings.

This overall framework enables an analysis that is not merely doctrinal but also opens space for normative innovation within the Indonesian legal system. This study contributes at three main levels: theoretical, normative, and practical. Theoretically, this study develops an integration of restorative justice, child protection law, and education law within a cohesive analytical framework. This approach fills a gap in the literature, which has traditionally tended to separate these three domains.

From a normative perspective, this study offers a reconstruction of legal principles for addressing violence in school settings. The proposed model positions restorative justice as a mechanism integrated with the accountability of educational institutions.

Practically, the results of this study can serve as a reference for policymakers, law enforcement officials, and educational institutions in formulating clearer and more practical guidelines for handling cases of violence against children in schools.

Strategically, this study places the best interests of the child at the center of legal interventions. It also critiques the dominance of repressive approaches and proposes a system that strikes a better balance between accountability, restoration, and protection.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the development of a more responsive and just Indonesian legal system, where the success of the law is measured not only by formal certainty but also by its ability to restore dignity, safety, and trust within the educational environment.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using the normative legal research (*doctrinal research*) method, which focuses on the analysis of legal norms, principles, and doctrines relevant to the application of restorative justice in cases of violence against children in educational settings. This approach was chosen because the study aims to conduct a normative reconstruction, not an empirical hypothesis test, as emphasized in contemporary legal methodology literature that positions doctrinal research as a systematic analysis of legal norms and principles (Smits, 2022). The research design treats law as a normative system that must be systematically analyzed to identify gaps between norms and practice. This study integrates the statutory approach, the case approach, the conceptual approach, and the comparative approach, which are widely recognized as the primary frameworks in modern normative legal research (Hutchinson, 2022). The statutory approach is used to examine the consistency and harmonization of regulations related to child protection and education, while the case approach is used to analyze the incident at SMAN 1 Cimarga as a concrete reflection of normative problems.

The conceptual approach is used to evaluate the development of the doctrine of restorative justice in modern law, while the comparative approach is used to compare practices in other jurisdictions such as New Zealand and Canada. With this design, the research is not only descriptive but also evaluative and prescriptive in formulating a legal model that is more responsive to child protection (Daly, 2022b).

This study adopts a complementary analytical approach to ensure a thorough legal interpretation. The statutory approach focuses on analyzing key regulations relevant to the juvenile criminal justice system, child protection, and educational governance. This analysis aims to assess the consistency of norms, the scope of regulations, and potential conflicts or legal gaps, as recommended in the methodology of normative legal research (Smits, 2022). The case study approach is used to examine the facts, institutional responses, and legal implications of the SMAN 1 Cimarga case. This approach allows for the identification of gaps between legal norms and practical implementation, particularly in the context of applying restorative justice in educational settings (Anyon, 2022).

A conceptual approach is used to examine restorative justice as an evolving legal doctrine, with a focus on the principles of restoration, victim participation, and offender accountability (Morrison & Vaandering, 2022). Meanwhile, a comparative approach is used to compare practices in countries such as New Zealand and Canada,

which have integrated restorative justice into their education and juvenile justice systems, thereby providing references to *best practices* (Hopkins, 2023). The data sources in this study are qualitative in nature and consist of three main categories. Primary data sources include legislation, court decisions, and technical regulations related to child protection and violence in educational settings. Analysis of primary sources is a key feature of doctrinal research, which focuses on legal norms as the primary object of study (van Hoecke, 2021).

Secondary data sources include legal literature, international journal articles, textbooks, and expert analyses discussing restorative justice, child protection, and education law. This literature is used to strengthen the theoretical framework and provide comparative and critical perspectives on the norms being analyzed (Liefwaard & Sloth-Nielsen, 2023). Tertiary data sources include legal encyclopedias, reports from international organizations, and policy documents related to child welfare. These sources serve as conceptual support to clarify terminology and the research context, as is common in document-based legal research (Hutchinson, 2022).

Data collection was conducted through *library research* by reviewing legal documents, academic literature, and relevant policy reports. This method is the primary approach in normative legal research, which focuses on the analysis of legal texts and legal doctrine (Taekema, 2021). Data analysis was conducted qualitatively using legal interpretation techniques, including systematic, teleological, and evaluative approaches. Systematic interpretation is used to understand the relationships between regulations within a cohesive legal framework, while teleological interpretation is used to interpret the purpose of establishing legal norms, particularly in the context of child protection and restorative justice (Barak, 2021).

The evaluative approach was used to assess the effectiveness of legal norms in practice by comparing normative provisions with the reality of implementation in the case of SMAN 1 Cimarga. This analysis also included the identification of legal gaps, regulatory inconsistencies, and implementation barriers, which are key characteristics of prescriptive legal research (Smits, 2022). The results of the analysis are then synthesized to produce normative recommendations in the form of a legal model that is more integrative between restorative justice and institutional accountability within the educational environment (González, 2023).

This study focuses on the Indonesian legal context, with an emphasis on the Banten region as the case study location. Institutionally, this study is limited to formal secondary education institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Education. Temporally, the study covers regulatory developments and practices since the enactment of Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 82 of 2015. The objects of analysis are not statistical populations, but rather legal documents, regulatory frameworks, restorative justice practices, and the specific case of SMAN 1 Cimarga. The study also considers references to similar cases at the national level to strengthen the validity of the normative analysis.

The expected outcomes of this study include a normative reconstruction of the implementation pathway for restorative justice in cases of school violence, the development of a legal model in the form of a school-based restorative panel or diversion mechanism, and a clarification of institutional responsibilities among schools, law enforcement agencies, and social services. In addition, this study is expected to contribute to policy-making by providing recommendations for revising

Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 82 of 2015 and related regulations, thereby creating a legal framework that is more integrated, responsive, and focused on child protection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Position of Restorative Justice within the Indonesian Legal Framework

An analysis of Indonesia’s legal framework indicates that restorative justice has gained relatively strong normative legitimacy, yet it remains insufficiently integrated at the operational level within the educational context. Law Number 11 of 2012 on the Juvenile Criminal Justice System explicitly recognizes diversion as a resolution mechanism oriented toward restoration. This principle is further reinforced by Law Number 35 of 2014, which places the best interests of the child as the primary principle of legal protection.

However, when these norms are connected to educational regulations, particularly Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 82 of 2015, a normative disjunction becomes evident. Educational regulations tend to emphasize prevention and administrative handling, without providing structured restorative mechanisms. A systematic interpretation suggests that these three legal regimes operate in parallel rather than in an integrated manner.

From a teleological perspective, the objective of child protection should be directed toward holistic restoration rather than mere punishment. In practice, however, the legal orientation remains predominantly retributive. This condition indicates that the position of restorative justice within Indonesia’s legal system is normatively recognized but institutionally underdeveloped.



Figure 1: Operationalizing Restorative Justice in Indonesia’s Educational Legal Framework

The primary issue does not lie in the absence of legal provisions but in the fragmentation of norms across regulatory regimes. A direct and effective response requires revising or replacing Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 82 of 2015 by explicitly incorporating operational restorative justice mechanisms. Policymakers should mandate restorative conferences within schools prior to the imposition of administrative or criminal sanctions, align terminology and principles with

Law No. 11 of 2012 concerning diversion and Law No. 35 of 2014 emphasizing the best interests of the child, and establish clear case thresholds that require minor to moderate cases to undergo restorative processes as a preliminary step. This approach would transform the legal framework from a parallel structure into a normatively and procedurally integrated system.

A further constraint arises from the absence of an institutional apparatus capable of implementing restorative justice. Regulations without an operational structure remain largely symbolic. Schools should therefore establish dedicated restorative justice units composed of guidance counselors, school leaders, parent representatives, and trained mediators. These units should operate under standardized procedures that cover case identification, mediation processes, restoration agreements, and follow-up monitoring, while also coordinating with external stakeholders such as probation officers, psychologists, and social workers. Such institutionalization would shift restorative justice from a normative concept into a routine and embedded practice.

The most fundamental barrier, however, concerns legal culture. As long as educational actors and law enforcement officials maintain a retributive orientation, regulatory reforms will not achieve substantive impact. A systemic transformation requires targeted interventions at the level of actors through structured training programs and policy incentives. Authorities should implement mandatory training on restorative justice and child-centered approaches for educators and law enforcement personnel, develop performance indicators that prioritize successful restoration rather than disciplinary outcomes, and promote national campaigns that reframe public perceptions from punishment toward recovery. These measures would realign the system's teleological orientation with the core principles of child protection.

2. Case Analysis of SMAN 1 Cimarga: A Legal Perspective

The case of violence at SMAN 1 Cimarga demonstrates that the legal mechanisms applied tend to follow a retributive pattern. Case handling focuses on determining fault and imposing sanctions on the perpetrator, without considering the possibility of restorative resolution.

A case-based approach reveals the absence of systematic efforts to involve the victim, the offender, and the school community in dialogue or mediation processes. This indicates that, at a procedural level, restorative justice was not activated, even though it is normatively permitted within the juvenile justice system.

This analysis highlights a clear gap between normative provisions and practical implementation. The lack of operational guidelines within educational regulations prevents school institutions from having the capacity or clear authority to apply restorative mechanisms. As a result, cases are directly transferred to the formal criminal justice system.



Figure 2: Operational Framework for Implementing Restorative Justice in School Violence Cases

The primary constraint lies in the absence of a procedural trigger mechanism that compels the activation of restorative justice. In the absence of such a requirement, actors tend to pursue the most expedient path, namely the imposition of sanctions or referral to the criminal justice system. A more effective approach requires establishing restorative justice as a mandatory initial stage in handling cases of school violence. Policymakers should require that all minor to moderate cases undergo a restorative conference prior to any formal legal process, define clear escalation criteria so that cases proceed to the criminal justice system only when restorative processes fail or do not produce an agreement, and integrate these procedures into school-level standard operating procedures as well as national education regulations. This intervention would systematically shift the handling model from a retributive-first approach to a restorative-first framework.

A further limitation arises from the lack of institutional space and structured mechanisms to facilitate dialogue. Without formalized forums, the involvement of victims, offenders, and the school community does not occur in a consistent or meaningful manner. Schools should therefore establish a structured and permanent mediation system by creating dedicated restorative justice units composed of guidance counselors, trained mediators, and representatives of the school community. These units should operate under standardized protocols that govern case preparation, facilitation of dialogue, and the formulation and monitoring of restoration agreements, while ensuring the mandatory participation of victims, offenders, and relevant stakeholders. This institutionalization would enable restorative justice to function as a practical and routine process rather than a merely normative concept.

The most critical issue concerns the lack of clear authority and institutional capacity at the school level, which leads institutions to defer cases to the formal criminal justice system. Addressing this gap requires both the provision of explicit legal mandates and the strengthening of institutional competencies. Authorities should establish a clear legal basis that authorizes schools to conduct restorative resolution for specified categories of cases, implement mandatory training for teachers and school leaders on restorative justice, child protection, and conflict resolution, and develop performance indicators that prioritize successful restoration over disciplinary

enforcement. These measures would reduce reliance on the criminal justice system and reinforce the role of schools as primary actors in conflict resolution.

3. Normative Gaps in Regulation

The analysis identifies three primary normative gaps. First, there is no explicit integration of restorative justice within the juvenile justice system and educational regulations. Second, operational procedures governing the implementation of restorative justice in school settings remain absent. Third, the allocation of responsibility among schools, law enforcement authorities, and child protection institutions lacks clarity.

These gaps generate legal uncertainty in practice and ultimately encourage reliance on retributive approaches as the default option. From a legal system perspective, this condition reflects a failure of regulatory harmonization.

A conceptual analysis further indicates that restorative justice has not yet been positioned as an integral component of the educational legal system. This finding reinforces the argument that a more comprehensive normative reconstruction is required.

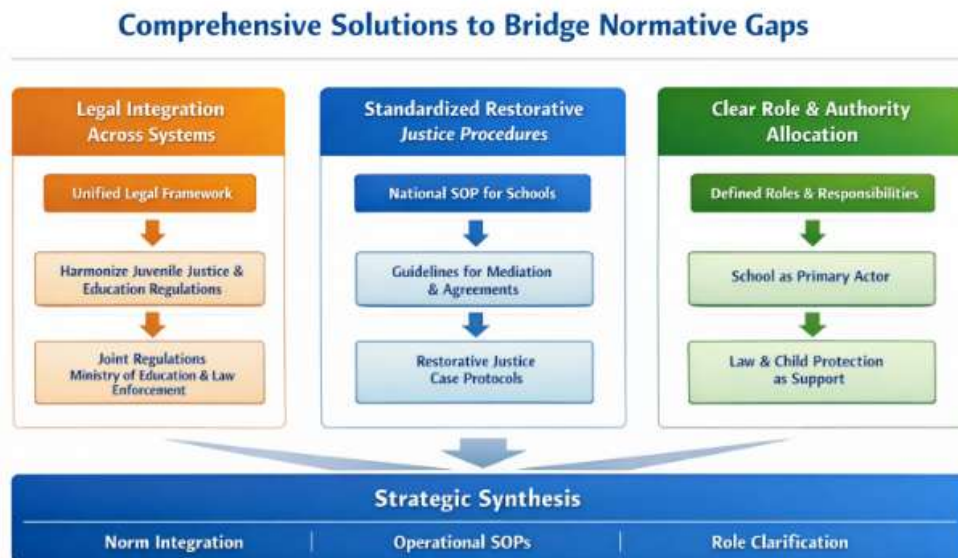


Figure 3: Integrated Legal Framework for Bridging Normative Gaps in Restorative Justice Implementation

The core problem lies in the disintegration of legal regimes, which prevents restorative justice from advancing beyond a conceptual framework. A comprehensive solution requires the development of an integrated legal structure that connects the juvenile justice system with educational regulations. This approach should include revising educational policies to explicitly incorporate the principles of diversion and restorative justice as established in Law No. 11 of 2012, formulating implementing regulations or joint regulations involving the Ministry of Education, law enforcement agencies, and the Ministry of Social Affairs, and harmonizing definitions, principles, and the scope of restorative justice across sectors. Such measures would eliminate regulatory fragmentation and establish a coherent normative framework.

A further limitation concerns the absence of operational mechanisms, which prevents normative provisions from functioning in practice. Addressing this issue requires the formulation of standardized national procedures governing the implementation of restorative justice in educational settings. These procedures should

define clear stages, including case identification, assessment, mediation, agreement formation, and monitoring, specify categories of cases that must adopt a restorative approach, and integrate these standards into school regulations and case-handling systems. This standardization would transform restorative justice from an abstract norm into a consistent and actionable operational mechanism.

The most critical issue relates to the lack of clarity in the distribution of authority among institutional actors. When roles remain undefined, actors tend to avoid responsibility and default to formal criminal processes. A structured redistribution of authority is therefore necessary, with schools designated as the primary actors in handling minor to moderate cases through restorative mechanisms, law enforcement agencies positioned as facilitators or supervisors rather than primary actors at the initial stage, and child protection institutions assigned a clear role in safeguarding the best interests of the child. This clarification would reduce legal uncertainty and prevent the over-criminalization of school-related cases.

4. Normative Reconstruction of the Restorative Justice Model

Based on the research findings, a normative reconstruction is required to integrate restorative justice into educational regulations. The proposed model includes the establishment of a restorative panel mechanism at the school level involving teachers, counselors, parents, and representatives from child protection institutions.

This model positions schools as the primary actors in the initial resolution of cases, with law enforcement authorities serving a supervisory role. The resolution process proceeds through structured dialogue aimed at achieving victim restoration, offender accountability, and the reconstruction of social relationships. The reconstruction also entails the development of clear operational guidelines, including criteria for cases eligible for restorative resolution and mechanisms for oversight.

Normative reconstruction should not focus solely on resolution mechanisms but must also strengthen institutional accountability. Schools must be positioned as entities with legal responsibility for preventing and addressing violence. This responsibility includes the obligation to provide reporting systems, victim protection mechanisms, and handling procedures grounded in restorative justice. In addition, coordination among schools, law enforcement agencies, and child protection institutions must be clarified through integrated regulation. This approach ensures that responsibility does not rest solely on individual perpetrators but also extends to the system that enables the occurrence of violence.

The findings indicate the need to revise Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 82 of 2015 to incorporate explicit provisions on restorative justice. The new regulation should clearly define procedures, responsible actors, and oversight mechanisms for implementing this approach within school settings. Furthermore, harmonization among child protection law, the criminal justice system, and educational regulations is necessary to establish a consistent and integrated legal framework.

From a strategic perspective, this reform would strengthen the child protection system in Indonesia by promoting a balance among legal certainty, substantive justice, and victim restoration. Without such reform, the legal system will continue to face limitations in responding effectively to the complexity of violence cases in educational environments.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that restorative justice in Indonesia possesses strong normative legitimacy but remains weak at the level of operational implementation within the educational sector. The analysis reveals a structural disconnection between the juvenile justice system, child protection law, and educational regulations, which results in fragmented legal frameworks and inconsistent application. In practice, the handling of violence cases in schools, as reflected in the SMAN 1 Cimarga case, continues to follow a predominantly retributive approach that prioritizes punishment over restoration.

The absence of clear operational procedures, institutional mechanisms, and defined authority among key actors further exacerbates this gap. As a result, restorative justice remains largely symbolic and fails to function as an integrated system within educational governance. This condition reflects a broader failure of regulatory harmonization and indicates that restorative justice has not yet been positioned as an integral component of the Indonesian educational legal system.

Normative reconstruction is therefore essential to transform restorative justice from a recognized principle into an operational framework that balances legal certainty, institutional accountability, and the best interests of the child.

First, policymakers should revise Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 82 of 2015 by explicitly incorporating restorative justice mechanisms, including mandatory restorative procedures, clear case thresholds, and structured implementation guidelines. This reform should ensure alignment with Law No. 11 of 2012 and Law No. 35 of 2014 to create a coherent and integrated legal framework.

Second, educational institutions should establish formal restorative justice structures, such as school-based restorative panels or mediation units, supported by standardized operating procedures and trained personnel. These mechanisms must facilitate structured dialogue, ensure victim participation, and monitor restoration outcomes to embed restorative justice as a routine institutional practice.

Third, the government should clarify and redistribute institutional responsibilities among schools, law enforcement agencies, and child protection bodies through integrated regulations. This includes positioning schools as primary actors in early-stage case resolution, while assigning law enforcement a supervisory role and strengthening inter-agency coordination.

Finally, systemic capacity building and cultural transformation are required. Mandatory training, performance indicators based on restorative outcomes, and public awareness initiatives should be implemented to shift the dominant paradigm from punishment-oriented responses toward restoration-oriented justice. Without these comprehensive reforms, the legal system will continue to struggle in addressing the complexity of violence in educational settings effectively.

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