

**Indonesia's Climate Crisis and the Limits of Environmental
Legislation**

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Received: 15-05-2026

Revised: 11-09-2026

Accepted: 11-09-2026

Abstract

This study aims to analyze law enforcement against children in conflict with the law in sexual abuse cases under Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System at the North Gorontalo District Police. Despite growing literature on restorative justice and juvenile justice in Indonesia, limited empirical attention has been given to how district-level police institutions balance criminal accountability, child protection, and victim interests in juvenile sexual abuse cases. This research employed an empirical legal method using statutory, conceptual, and socio-legal approaches. Data were obtained through observation, interviews with investigators from the Women and Children Protection Unit, and review of relevant legal documents and literature. The findings show that law enforcement is implemented through repressive and preventive approaches. Repressive measures include investigation, summons, examination, and evidence collection, while preventive measures involve legal education, community supervision, and institutional coordination. Implementation remains constrained by non-cooperative juvenile offenders, weak community participation, limited legal awareness, and insufficient coordination among police, families, schools, and child protection institutions. Cases recorded from 2023 to 2025, involving offenders aged 15 to 16 years, indicate a recurring problem requiring an integrated response. This study contributes empirical insight into the gap between juvenile justice norms and their practical implementation at the district police level. It concludes that effective law enforcement must integrate criminal accountability, restorative justice, victim protection, child rehabilitation, and community-based prevention.

Keywords: children in conflict with the law, law enforcement, restorative justice

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis penegakan hukum terhadap anak yang berkonflik dengan hukum dalam tindak pidana pencabulan berdasarkan Undang-Undang Nomor 11 Tahun 2012 tentang Sistem Peradilan Pidana Anak di Kepolisian Resor Gorontalo Utara. Meskipun kajian mengenai keadilan restoratif dan sistem peradilan pidana anak di Indonesia terus berkembang, perhatian empiris terhadap bagaimana institusi

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kepolisian di tingkat daerah menyeimbangkan pertanggungjawaban pidana, perlindungan anak, dan kepentingan korban dalam perkara pencabulan yang melibatkan anak masih terbatas. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode hukum empiris dengan pendekatan perundang-undangan, konseptual, dan sosio-legal. Data diperoleh melalui observasi, wawancara dengan penyidik Unit Perlindungan Perempuan dan Anak, serta studi dokumen dan literatur hukum yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penegakan hukum dilakukan melalui pendekatan represif dan preventif. Pendekatan represif meliputi penyidikan, pemanggilan, pemeriksaan, dan pengumpulan alat bukti, sedangkan pendekatan preventif dilakukan melalui edukasi hukum, pengawasan masyarakat, dan koordinasi kelembagaan. Implementasinya masih menghadapi hambatan berupa ketidakkooperatifan anak pelaku, lemahnya partisipasi masyarakat, rendahnya kesadaran hukum, dan belum optimalnya koordinasi antarlembaga. Kasus yang tercatat pada 2023–2025 dengan pelaku berusia 15–16 tahun menunjukkan persoalan yang berulang dan membutuhkan respons terpadu. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi empiris dalam menjelaskan kesenjangan antara norma sistem peradilan pidana anak dan implementasinya pada tingkat kepolisian daerah. Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa penegakan hukum harus mengintegrasikan pertanggungjawaban pidana, keadilan restoratif, perlindungan korban, rehabilitasi anak, dan pencegahan berbasis masyarakat.

Kata kunci: *anak berkonflik dengan hukum, keadilan restoratif, penegakan hukum*

1. INTRODUCTION

The involvement of children in criminal conduct, particularly sexual abuse offenses, continues to raise serious legal and social concerns in Indonesia. This issue is influenced by a combination of weak parental supervision, exposure to harmful digital content, peer influence, and limited legal awareness within the community. Children who commit sexual offenses occupy a complex legal position because they are both subjects of criminal responsibility and individuals entitled to special protection. At the same time, sexual abuse cases involving children create significant harm for victims and generate public anxiety.¹ The challenge becomes more complicated when law enforcement must respond to community demands for accountability while respecting the developmental condition of child offenders. As a consequence, law enforcement institutions are required

¹Hafrida Hafrida, “Restorative Justice In Juvenile Justice To Formulate Integrated Child Criminal Court,” *Jurnal Hukum Dan Peradilan* 8, no. 3 (December 12, 2019): 439, <https://doi.org/10.25216/jhp.8.3.2019.439-457>.

to apply procedures that are not merely punitive but also rehabilitative and child-sensitive. The resulting challenge lies in balancing criminal accountability with the legal imperative to protect the best interests of the child.

Efforts by the Indonesian government to regulate juvenile criminal justice have produced a specific legal framework through Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System. This law establishes special procedures for handling children in conflict with the law from investigation to post-sentencing guidance. One of its most important principles is the prioritization of restorative justice, which seeks to repair harm, restore social relations, and prevent children from repeated criminal behavior.² The law also recognizes diversion as a mechanism to resolve certain child cases outside formal criminal proceedings. In contrast to adult criminal justice, juvenile justice emphasizes protection, education, rehabilitation, and reintegration. The aim is to ensure that law enforcement does not damage the future development of the child. However, in practice, challenges remain in applying these principles consistently, especially in cases involving sexual abuse.

Inconsistencies between the normative ideals of juvenile justice and law enforcement practice have contributed to practical difficulties in handling child offenders. In some cases, investigators must deal with children who are difficult to contact, fail to comply with summonses, or are not cooperative during the investigation process.³ These obstacles may delay case handling and complicate the fulfillment of procedural requirements under juvenile justice law. At the same time, public participation in supervising children and reporting sexual abuse cases remains limited.⁴ Community members may hesitate to report cases due to social stigma, skepticism, or limited understanding of child protection mechanisms. Such conditions weaken preventive

²Mahendra Ridwanul Ghoni and Pujiyono Pujiyono, "Perlindungan Hukum Terhadap Anak Yang Berhadapan Dengan Hukum Melalui Implementasi Diversi Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Pembangunan Hukum Indonesia* 2, no. 3 (August 2020): 331–42, <https://doi.org/10.14710/jphi.v2i3.331-342>.

³Edi Suharto, "Restorative Justice in Indonesian Law on Juvenile Criminal Justice System and Its Implications for Social Work," *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology* 10 (April 2021): 881–90, <https://doi.org/10.6000/1929-4409.2021.10.104>.

⁴Mahfud Nazeri and Saroja Dhanapal, "Restorative Justice: An Alternative Process for Solving Juvenile Crimes in Indonesia," *Brawijaya Law Journal* 6, no. 2 (October 2019): 157–69, <https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.blj.2019.006.02.03>.

efforts and reduce the effectiveness of restorative justice implementation. Addressing this issue requires an evaluation of both legal procedures and the institutional capacity of law enforcement agencies. Existing studies on juvenile justice in Indonesia have predominantly focused on the normative foundations of diversion, restorative justice, and legal protection for children in conflict with the law. However, comparatively limited attention has been devoted to the actual implementation of these principles by police institutions in sexual abuse cases involving child offenders. In particular, insufficient empirical explanation exists regarding how investigators simultaneously address criminal accountability, the best interests of the child, victim protection, and institutional constraints at the local level.

A representative case of these challenges can be observed in the handling of juvenile sexual abuse cases by the North Gorontalo District Police. Based on the research findings, cases of sexual abuse committed by children were recorded in 2023, 2024, and 2025, with the dominant educational background of offenders being junior and vocational high school levels. The recurrence of cases during the 2023–2025 period is particularly important because it suggests that the problem cannot be understood merely as an isolated criminal event. Rather, it indicates a continuing interaction between legal enforcement, adolescent vulnerability, family supervision, community awareness, and institutional capacity. This local context therefore provides an empirical basis for examining how juvenile justice principles operate beyond their normative formulation. Although the number of cases did not show a sharp increase, the persistence of similar cases indicates that the problem requires serious legal and social attention. The North Gorontalo District Police, particularly the Women and Children Protection Unit, plays a strategic role in investigating these cases while ensuring the protection of children's rights. The case context also reveals the importance of cooperation between police, local government, families, schools, and the community. However, practical obstacles continue to arise from limited community synergy and the non-cooperative behavior of some child offenders. The North Gorontalo case therefore provides a concrete lens through which to analyze the implementation of juvenile justice principles in sexual abuse cases.

Fundamental legal principles are at stake in this scenario, especially the principle of the best interests of the child. The enforcement of criminal law against children must be carried out carefully so that punishment does not become the primary orientation.⁵ This raises the question of how far law enforcement can remain firm against sexual abuse while still protecting the psychological and social development of child offenders. In the absence of effective coordination and community participation, the juvenile justice process may become less restorative and more formalistic. These risks are amplified in local law enforcement settings, where police officers must balance legal mandates, victim protection, and social expectations. As a result, it becomes necessary to critically examine how restorative and preventive approaches are implemented in practice. Such examination is essential to ensure that juvenile justice functions not only as a legal mechanism but also as a child protection instrument.

This study seeks to analyze law enforcement against children in conflict with the law in sexual abuse cases under Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System. By focusing on the North Gorontalo District Police, the research investigates two interrelated aspects: the implementation of law enforcement against juvenile sexual offenders and the obstacles faced by police in handling such cases. Through an empirical legal approach, the study aims to contribute to the discourse on juvenile justice by offering insights into restorative, preventive, and institutional responses to child sexual offending in Indonesia. Although the research is situated in North Gorontalo, the study also seeks to provide broader insights into the challenges faced by local law enforcement institutions in translating child-sensitive justice principles into practical enforcement in serious juvenile cases.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs an empirical legal method, which aims to examine the implementation of law enforcement against children in conflict with the law in sexual

⁵Putri Kusuma Amanda, "Juvenile Sex Offender Rehabilitation: How The Us Approach Can Help Indonesia Satisfy Its Commitment To Restorative Justice Principles," *Indonesia Law Review* 4, no. 1 (January 2014): 86, <https://doi.org/10.15742/ilrev.v4n1.76>.

abuse cases under Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System.⁶ The empirical legal method is used to analyze how legal norms are applied in practice by law enforcement institutions, particularly within the North Gorontalo District Police. This research focuses on the relationship between statutory provisions, institutional practice, and social realities in handling juvenile sexual offenders. The study applies a statutory, conceptual, and socio-legal approach. The North Gorontalo District Police was selected as the empirical setting because juvenile sexual abuse cases were recorded during the 2023–2025 period, providing a relevant setting for examining the continuity of law enforcement practices and the institutional challenges associated with handling child offenders. The statutory approach is used to assess the legal basis of juvenile criminal justice, while the conceptual approach examines restorative justice, diversion, and the best interests of the child. Additionally, the socio-legal approach is applied through a case study at the North Gorontalo District Police to understand practical obstacles in enforcing juvenile justice principles.

The data used in this study consist of primary data and secondary data.⁷ Primary data were obtained through observation and interviews with investigators from the Women and Children Protection Unit of the North Gorontalo District Police, as well as relevant stakeholders involved in child protection. Secondary data include statutory regulations, legal literature, academic journals, previous studies, and official documents related to juvenile criminal justice and sexual abuse cases. Data collection was conducted through field research and literature study by identifying, organizing, and categorizing relevant information based on the research problems. The data were analyzed qualitatively using descriptive-analytical reasoning, which connects legal norms with empirical findings from the field. This method enables a critical evaluation of the implementation of law enforcement against juvenile sexual offenders and the obstacles faced by police in applying restorative and preventive approaches.

⁶Jonaedi Efendi & Johnny Ibrahim, *Metode Penelitian Hukum Normatif & Empiris*, vol. 1, cet. 2 (Jakarta: Kencana, 2016).

⁷Ani Purwati, *Metode Penelitian Hukum Teori Dan Praktek* (Surabaya: CV. Jakad Media Publishing, 2020).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Implementation of Law Enforcement Against Juvenile Sexual Offenders under Indonesia's Juvenile Justice System

Law enforcement against children in conflict with the law in sexual abuse cases must be understood within the special framework of Indonesia's juvenile criminal justice system. Law Number 11 of 2012 establishes that children who commit criminal acts cannot be treated in the same manner as adult offenders.⁸ The handling of juvenile offenders requires a child-sensitive approach that prioritizes protection, rehabilitation, education, and reintegration.⁹ This framework places restorative justice as a central principle in resolving juvenile cases. However, restorative justice should be distinguished from diversion as a procedural mechanism. While restorative justice represents a broader principle of accountability, rehabilitation, and harm repair, diversion is subject to specific statutory requirements under the Juvenile Criminal Justice System. In the context of sexual abuse offenses, law enforcement must still ensure accountability while preventing excessive criminalization of children. The legal process must therefore balance victim protection, public interest, and the best interests of the child offender. Accordingly, child protection should not be interpreted as diminishing the seriousness of the offense or the procedural rights and recovery needs of victims. This balance becomes the foundation for police action in handling juvenile sexual abuse cases at the investigation stage.

The implementation of law enforcement at the North Gorontalo District Police shows that juvenile sexual abuse cases are handled through both repressive and preventive approaches. The repressive approach is reflected in the investigation process conducted by police officers when a report of sexual abuse involving a child offender is received. Investigators carry out summonses, examinations, evidence collection, and coordination with relevant child protection institutions. However, this repressive process is not intended solely to punish the child offender. It must remain oriented toward restorative

⁸Ursula Kilkelly and Stefaan Pleysier, "Rights of the Child in the Child Justice System," *Youth Justice* 23, no. 2 (August 2023): 135–39, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14732254231185820>.

⁹Dyah Listyarini, "Juvenile Justice System Through Diversion And Restorative Justice Policy," *Diponegoro Law Review* 2, no. 1 (April 28, 2017): 168, <https://doi.org/10.14710/dilrev.2.1.2017.168-184>.

justice as required by the juvenile criminal justice system. The preventive approach is carried out through efforts to reduce the possibility of similar offenses, including community education and supervision. These two approaches demonstrate that law enforcement is not merely a matter of criminal procedure but also a mechanism for child protection. These findings suggest that repressive and preventive measures should not be understood as separate forms of intervention, but as complementary components of juvenile justice. Repressive measures ensure legal accountability after an offense occurs, whereas preventive measures address the social and institutional conditions that may contribute to repeated offending.

The role of the Women and Children Protection Unit within the North Gorontalo District Police is central in implementing juvenile justice principles. This unit is responsible for handling cases involving children, women, and vulnerable victims. In juvenile sexual abuse cases, the unit must ensure that the investigation process respects the rights of children while also addressing the harm suffered by victims. The involvement of specialized officers is important because cases involving children require sensitivity, confidentiality, and procedural caution. Investigators must also coordinate with families, social workers, and child protection agencies to ensure that the child's psychological and social condition is considered. This institutional role reflects the importance of specialized police structures in implementing child-oriented law enforcement. Without such specialization, juvenile cases may be handled using an adult criminal justice perspective. The significance of the Women and Children Protection Unit therefore extends beyond ordinary investigative functions. Its role also involves managing the practical tension between effective criminal investigation, the protection of child offenders, and the protection of victims throughout the legal process.

The findings indicate that the implementation of law enforcement has generally referred to Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System. However, compliance with the statutory framework does not automatically guarantee effective child-sensitive justice. The empirical findings from the North Gorontalo District Police demonstrate that juvenile justice operates through an interaction between formal criminal investigation, child-sensitive procedural obligations, preventive measures, and

cooperation with institutions outside the police. The handling process recognizes the special status of children as offenders who remain entitled to legal protection.¹⁰ Although criminal proceedings may still be pursued, the process must avoid unnecessary deprivation of liberty.¹¹ The juvenile justice system emphasizes that detention and imprisonment should be used only as a last resort. This principle indicates that proportionality in juvenile justice concerns not only the severity of punishment but also the suitability of legal measures to the child's age, developmental condition, and prospects for rehabilitation. This principle is particularly relevant because children are still in the stage of physical, emotional, and social development. Punitive responses that ignore these conditions may damage the child's future and weaken the rehabilitative purpose of juvenile justice. Therefore, the implementation of law enforcement must remain proportionate, rehabilitative, and restorative.

In practice, the application of restorative justice in sexual abuse cases involving children presents a complex challenge. Sexual abuse is a serious offense that produces significant harm for victims and public concern within the community.¹² At the same time, when the perpetrator is a child, the legal response cannot be based solely on punishment. Restorative justice requires attention to accountability, victim recovery, family involvement, and social reintegration.¹³ This means that the police must not only investigate the offense but also facilitate communication and coordination among relevant parties. However, restorative justice must be applied carefully so that it does not reduce the seriousness of the victim's suffering. A victim-sensitive approach requires protection from intimidation, secondary victimization, and processes that may pressure victims or their families to accept informal settlement mechanisms. The implementation of

¹⁰Randy Pradityo, "Restorative Justice Dalam Sistem Peradilan Pidana Anak," *Jurnal Hukum Dan Peradilan* 5, no. 3 (November 30, 2016): 319, <https://doi.org/10.25216/jhp.5.3.2016.319-330>.

¹¹Rendy Airlangga, Hizkia Andhian Pradipta, and Dyta Widi Erdianto, "Reformulasi Konsep Diversi Berdasarkan Cita Hukum Non-Diskriminasi," *Refleksi Hukum: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum* 8, no. 1 (March 17, 2024): 17–38, <https://doi.org/10.24246/jrh.2023.v8.i1.p17-38>.

¹²Iryana Anwar et al., "Restorative Approaches to Managing Children in Conflict with the Law," *JlHK* 6, no. 1 (July 2024): 37–49, <https://doi.org/10.46924/jlhk.v6i1.193>.

¹³Norjihan Ab Aziz et al., "Restorative Justice in The Child Justice System: Implementation in Other Jurisdictions," *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)* 7, no. 6 (June 2022): e001561, <https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v7i6.1561>.

restorative justice in this context therefore requires a balanced and case-specific assessment. In this context, the restorative orientation of juvenile justice does not necessarily mean that every sexual abuse case involving a child offender can be resolved outside formal criminal proceedings. Its application must remain consistent with statutory requirements, the seriousness of the offense, and the protection of victims.

The North Gorontalo District Police case illustrates that juvenile sexual abuse cases require an integrated law enforcement model. Police action alone is insufficient if families, schools, local government, and communities do not participate in prevention and supervision. The persistence of cases in 2023, 2024, and 2025 indicates that the issue is not incidental but requires sustained institutional response. Although the available case information does not indicate a dramatic numerical increase, the recurrence of similar cases across consecutive years is significant because it demonstrates the persistence of the problem rather than an isolated pattern of offending. The age of juvenile offenders, ranging from 15 to 16 years old, also shows the need for stronger preventive intervention during adolescence. Legal enforcement must therefore be supported by early intervention, moral education, digital supervision, and community-based child protection. These findings demonstrate that juvenile sexual offending is both a legal issue and a social problem. Consequently, law enforcement must be integrated with broader preventive and rehabilitative policies. The North Gorontalo experience therefore indicates that the effectiveness of juvenile justice depends not only on statutory compliance but also on the institutional capacity to integrate legal accountability, rehabilitation, victim protection, and preventive intervention.

3.2. Obstacles in Law Enforcement Against Juvenile Sexual Offenders at the North Gorontalo District Police

The implementation of law enforcement against juvenile sexual offenders at the North Gorontalo District Police faces several practical obstacles. One of the main obstacles is the non-cooperative behavior of child offenders during the investigation process. In some cases, children are difficult to contact, fail to respond to police summonses, or cannot be easily located. This situation delays the investigation and

complicates the fulfillment of procedural requirements under juvenile justice law. Non-cooperation may also affect the ability of investigators to obtain complete information regarding the offense. Since juvenile cases require timely and careful handling, such delays may weaken the effectiveness of law enforcement. This obstacle shows that procedural enforcement must be supported by family and community cooperation. However, non-cooperation in juvenile cases should not be understood solely as an unwillingness to comply with legal procedures. It may also be influenced by fear of criminal proceedings, limited understanding of legal procedures, family circumstances, or inadequate adult assistance. Therefore, investigators must combine procedural firmness with a child-sensitive assessment of the factors underlying such behavior.

The lack of effective community synergy also becomes a significant obstacle in handling juvenile sexual abuse cases. Community participation is essential in supervising children, providing early education, and reporting suspected offenses.¹⁴ However, the findings show that some community members remain passive or skeptical in responding to cases involving children. This condition may be caused by social stigma, fear of family conflict, lack of legal knowledge, or the belief that sexual abuse cases should be resolved privately. Such attitudes can delay reporting and reduce the effectiveness of preventive measures. When communities fail to participate, police institutions are burdened with problems that should also be addressed at the social level. Therefore, weak community synergy directly affects both prevention and law enforcement. This finding indicates that community participation functions not only as a preventive mechanism but also as an important component of effective law enforcement. Limited community involvement may delay the disclosure of offenses, restrict early intervention, and weaken the social support required for the rehabilitation and reintegration of children.

Another obstacle relates to the complexity of balancing the rights of child offenders and the protection of victims. In sexual abuse cases, victims require protection, recovery,

¹⁴Ernawati et al., "Restorative Justice for the Protection of Children in Conflict with the Law: A Legislative Perspective in Muslim Countries in Southeast Asia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Gema Perencana* 4, no. 3 (April 2026): 2723–42, <https://doi.org/10.61860/jigp.v4i3.379>.

and access to justice.¹⁵ At the same time, child offenders must be treated according to juvenile justice principles. This dual obligation creates a difficult position for law enforcement officers. If the process focuses too heavily on punishment, the child offender's rights may be neglected. Conversely, if the process overemphasizes the offender's protection, the victim's interests may be perceived as being ignored. The police must therefore carefully maintain procedural fairness for both sides. This complexity makes juvenile sexual abuse cases more sensitive than ordinary juvenile offenses. Accordingly, the central challenge is not to prioritize either offender protection or victim protection, but to develop procedures capable of securing both interests proportionately. This dual-protection requirement constitutes a distinctive feature of juvenile sexual abuse cases and requires law enforcement officers to integrate child-sensitive justice with victim-sensitive procedural safeguards.

Institutional coordination is also an important challenge in implementing juvenile justice. The handling of children in conflict with the law requires cooperation among police, social workers, correctional officers, child protection agencies, schools, and families. If coordination is weak, the implementation of restorative justice and preventive measures becomes less effective.¹⁶ Police officers may face difficulties in obtaining social reports, ensuring family involvement, or arranging follow-up guidance for the child. The absence of strong institutional collaboration may cause the process to become merely formalistic. In such conditions, the restorative purpose of the juvenile justice system may not be fully achieved. Effective coordination is therefore necessary to transform legal norms into practical protection. Institutional coordination should therefore be understood as a substantive component of juvenile justice rather than merely an administrative arrangement. The effectiveness of investigation, social assessment, rehabilitation, family

¹⁵Wagiman Wagiman and Didi Jubaidi, "Ultimum Remedium Principles: Realizing Restorative Justice For Children In Conflict With The Law," *KRTHA BHAYANGKARA* 18, no. 3 (December 2024): 685–701, <https://doi.org/10.31599/krtha.v18i3.2984>.

¹⁶Shinta Ayu Purnamawati et al., "Child-Friendly Justice and Children's Rights from Criminal Cases; Islamic Law Notes," *Legality: Jurnal Ilmiah Hukum* 32, no. 1 (March 2024): 141–54, <https://doi.org/10.22219/ljih.v32i1.31681>.

involvement, and victim protection depends on timely communication and clearly defined responsibilities among the institutions involved.

The social background of child offenders also affects the law enforcement process. The data in the North Gorontalo District Police show that juvenile sexual abuse offenders were adolescents aged 15 and 16 years old. This indicates that children in mid-adolescence may be vulnerable to negative influences, including exposure to sexual content, peer pressure, and weak supervision. The problem cannot be solved only through criminal investigation after the offense occurs. Preventive education on sexuality, legal awareness, digital literacy, and moral responsibility is required. Thus, law enforcement must be connected with educational and social prevention strategies. These findings further suggest that preventive intervention should not focus solely on individual children but also on the social environments in which adolescent behavior develops, particularly families, schools, peer groups, and digital environments.

The obstacles identified in the North Gorontalo case reveal that juvenile sexual abuse cannot be addressed solely through legal instruments. Although Law Number 11 of 2012 provides a clear normative framework, its implementation depends heavily on institutional readiness and social support. Non-cooperative offenders, weak community participation, coordination difficulties, and limited preventive awareness all reduce the effectiveness of juvenile justice. These obstacles demonstrate a gap between legal ideals and field realities. The juvenile justice system requires not only statutory compliance but also practical mechanisms that ensure children, victims, families, and communities are properly involved. Without such mechanisms, law enforcement may become reactive rather than preventive. Therefore, strengthening institutional and community-based support is essential for effective juvenile justice implementation. The North Gorontalo case therefore demonstrates that the implementation gap in juvenile justice does not arise solely from deficiencies in legal norms, but also from the interaction between offender-related factors, community participation, institutional coordination, and preventive capacity. Effective juvenile justice consequently requires both legal compliance and sufficient institutional capacity to translate statutory principles into practical protection, rehabilitation, and victim-centered justice.

3.3. Strengthening Restorative and Preventive Law Enforcement in Juvenile Sexual Abuse Cases

Strengthening law enforcement against juvenile sexual offenders requires a model that integrates restorative justice and preventive action. Restorative justice should not be understood as a mechanism that eliminates accountability. Instead, it must be applied as a process that requires the child offender to recognize wrongdoing, repair harm, and participate in rehabilitation.¹⁷ In sexual abuse cases, restorative justice must be carefully designed to protect victims from further trauma.¹⁸ The process should involve trained officers, social workers, families, and child protection professionals. This approach allows law enforcement to address both the legal and psychological dimensions of the case. Therefore, restorative justice must be implemented with safeguards, not merely as an informal settlement. The integrated approach proposed in this study is based on the finding that criminal enforcement and restorative intervention cannot operate effectively when applied in isolation. Rather, legal accountability, victim protection, rehabilitation, and prevention should function as mutually reinforcing components of juvenile justice.

Preventive law enforcement must be strengthened through early intervention in families, schools, and communities. Since the offenders are adolescents, educational institutions have an important role in preventing sexual misconduct. Schools should provide legal awareness, character education, digital literacy, and guidance on respectful social relationships. Families must also strengthen supervision over children's use of digital media and peer interactions. Community leaders can contribute by creating safe reporting mechanisms and reducing stigma against victims.¹⁹ These preventive measures can reduce the likelihood of children becoming involved in sexual abuse cases. Prevention

¹⁷Keisha April et al., "Conceptualizing Juvenile Justice Reform: Integrating the Public Health, Social Ecological, and Restorative Justice Models," *Children and Youth Services Review* 148 (May 2023): 106887, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2023.106887>.

¹⁸Rebecca L. Fix, Noel Vest, and Kelli R. Thompson, "Evidencing the Need to Screen for Social Determinants of Health Among Boys Entering a Juvenile Prison: A Latent Profile Analysis," *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 20, no. 3 (July 2022): 187–205, <https://doi.org/10.1177/15412040221096359>.

¹⁹I Wayan Awe Ditya Priyana, Ni Ketut Wiratny, and Kadek Dedy Suryana, "Diversion and Restorative Justice for Children Facing the Law," *Asian Journal of Social and Humanities* 3, no. 11 (August 2025), <https://doi.org/10.59888/ajosh.v3i11.606>.

should therefore become an integral part of juvenile law enforcement policy. This preventive orientation is particularly important because the cases identified in North Gorontalo involved adolescents aged 15 to 16 years, indicating that intervention should address not only individual behavior but also the family, school, peer, and digital environments in which adolescent conduct develops.

Police institutions also need to strengthen child-sensitive investigation procedures. Investigators handling juvenile sexual abuse cases must have sufficient understanding of child psychology, victim protection, and restorative justice principles.²⁰ The examination of child offenders should be conducted in a manner that avoids intimidation and respects the child's dignity. At the same time, investigators must ensure that the rights of victims are protected throughout the process. Specialized training for officers in the Women and Children Protection Unit is therefore essential. Such training can improve the quality of investigation and reduce the risk of procedural violations. A professional and child-sensitive investigation process strengthens both legal certainty and child protection. Such procedures should also ensure that victim-sensitive safeguards remain integrated into every stage of investigation, so that the protection afforded to child offenders does not result in the marginalization of victims' procedural rights and recovery needs.

Community participation must be improved as part of an integrated juvenile justice strategy. The community should not only report cases after they occur but also participate in preventing juvenile delinquency. Public education is needed to increase awareness that sexual abuse involving children is a serious legal and social issue. Communities must understand that silence or informal concealment can worsen the harm suffered by victims and allow harmful behavior to continue. Local government, police, schools, and religious institutions can jointly conduct awareness programs.²¹ This collaborative approach can create a stronger protective environment for children. Effective community synergy will

²⁰Juniarta Simamora and Junifer Dame Panjaitan, "Implementation Of Legal And Human Rights Protection For Children And Disabilities," *International Journal of Social Research* 1, no. 2 (December 2023): 51–60, <https://doi.org/10.59888/insight.v1i2.7>.

²¹Afriandi Sikumbang and Rineke Sara, "Harmonization of Restorative Justice Regulations within the Indonesian Criminal Justice System," *Greenation International Journal of Law and Social Sciences* 3, no. 2 (June 2025): 318–28, <https://doi.org/10.38035/gijlss.v3i2.426>.

support both preventive and restorative law enforcement. Community participation should therefore be treated as a structural element of juvenile justice implementation rather than merely as supplementary support for police action. Its effectiveness directly influences early detection, reporting, prevention, rehabilitation, and social reintegration.

Institutional coordination should also be strengthened through clearer mechanisms among law enforcement and child protection institutions. The police need effective cooperation with social services, correctional centers, psychologists, schools, and local government agencies. Such coordination is necessary to ensure that children receive proper assessment, guidance, and rehabilitation. It also helps ensure that victims receive appropriate protection and recovery support. In juvenile sexual abuse cases, no single institution can address all aspects of the problem. An integrated institutional response is required to achieve legal accountability, victim recovery, and child rehabilitation.²² This coordination reflects the true spirit of the juvenile criminal justice system. Based on the findings, such an integrated response can be understood through four interrelated components: criminal accountability, child rehabilitation, victim protection, and community-based prevention. Institutional coordination functions as the connecting mechanism that enables these components to operate consistently throughout the case-handling process.

The findings from the North Gorontalo District Police show that law enforcement against juvenile sexual offenders must move beyond a purely punitive framework. The persistence of cases indicates that legal response must be supported by preventive education, family supervision, community participation, and institutional coordination. Restorative justice remains important, but it must be applied carefully in sexual abuse cases due to the seriousness of the offense. Unlike broader studies on juvenile justice, this research highlights practical obstacles encountered by police officers in applying child-oriented law enforcement. Through this perspective, the study contributes to the development of a more balanced model of juvenile justice that combines accountability,

²²Rudi Eko Kurniawan, Sunardi Sunardi, and Moh. Muhibbin, "The Implementation of Diversion for Juvenile Offenders: A Case Study in the Batu City Police Department," *Journal of Law, Politic and Humanities* 5, no. 5 (July 2025): 3545–54, <https://doi.org/10.38035/jlph.v5i5.1923>.

rehabilitation, prevention, and protection. More importantly, the North Gorontalo case demonstrates that the effectiveness of juvenile justice depends not merely on the existence of a normative legal framework, but on the institutional capacity to translate that framework into coordinated practices that simultaneously protect children, uphold victim rights, and prevent repeated offending.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study finds that law enforcement against children in conflict with the law in sexual abuse cases at the North Gorontalo District Police reflects a complex relationship between criminal accountability, child protection, victim protection, and restorative justice under Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System. Although juvenile sexual abuse is a serious offense that requires legal accountability, children as offenders cannot be treated in the same manner as adult perpetrators. The findings show that law enforcement has been implemented through both repressive and preventive approaches, with the Women and Children Protection Unit playing an important role in handling cases involving child offenders. However, practical obstacles remain, including the non-cooperative behavior of juvenile offenders, weak community participation, limited preventive awareness, and insufficient institutional coordination. The cases recorded from 2023 to 2025, involving offenders aged 15 to 16 years, indicate that juvenile sexual abuse remains a recurring legal and social problem. Therefore, law enforcement must not be viewed merely as criminal punishment but as an integrated mechanism combining accountability, rehabilitation, victim protection, and prevention. The principal contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that the effectiveness of juvenile justice at the district police level depends not only on statutory compliance but also on the institutional capacity to integrate child-sensitive procedures, victim protection, rehabilitation, community participation, and preventive intervention. This study therefore emphasizes the need for a balanced juvenile justice model that is restorative, preventive, victim-sensitive, and child-sensitive, particularly in handling juvenile sexual abuse cases at the district police level in North Gorontalo. Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted within the context of a single district police institution and the limited

accessibility of sensitive juvenile case information. Future studies may extend this analysis through comparative research across different police jurisdictions and institutions within the juvenile justice system.

Effective handling of juvenile sexual abuse cases requires stronger integration between police enforcement, family supervision, school-based education, community participation, and child protection institutions. The North Gorontalo District Police should strengthen child-sensitive investigation procedures, improve coordination with social workers, correctional centers, local government, schools, and child protection institutions, and ensure that restorative justice is applied carefully without neglecting victims' rights. At the procedural level, clearer coordination protocols should be established to define institutional responsibilities in investigation, social assessment, rehabilitation, victim protection, and follow-up assistance. Families and schools must be actively involved in providing legal awareness, digital literacy, sexuality education, and moral guidance for adolescents. Community members should also be encouraged to report cases, supervise children, and reduce stigma against victims. At the preventive level, local government, schools, police, and community institutions should develop coordinated programs on legal awareness, digital safety, adolescent protection, and early identification of risky behavior. At the policy level, preventive and rehabilitative mechanisms should be institutionalized to ensure that children in conflict with the law receive proper guidance while victims obtain protection and recovery. Strengthening these measures is essential to ensure legal certainty, child protection, victim justice, and the effective implementation of Indonesia's juvenile criminal justice system.

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