

The Implementation of Diversion in Juvenile Criminal Justice System in North Sumatra: Challenges and Legal Effectiveness

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ABSTRACT

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The implementation of diversion in the juvenile criminal justice system remains a crucial issue because children in conflict with the law require legal protection, rehabilitation, and social reintegration rather than punitive treatment. Although Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System mandates diversion at the stages of investigation, prosecution, and court examination, its practical implementation in North Sumatra still faces various institutional, procedural, and socio-cultural challenges. This research addresses three main questions: how diversion is implemented in juvenile criminal cases in North Sumatra, what obstacles affect its implementation, and how effective diversion is as a legal mechanism for achieving restorative justice. This study uses a socio-legal research design with a descriptive-analytical approach. Data were collected through library research, document study, observation, and interviews with legal actors and related stakeholders involved in the diversion process. The findings show that diversion has been formally recognized and applied, but its effectiveness remains partial. Diversion is more successful when conducted at the earliest stage of the criminal process, when victims are willing to participate, families provide support, and law enforcement officials actively facilitate restorative dialogue. However, several obstacles remain, including different understandings among law enforcement officers, weak institutional coordination, limited trained facilitators, inadequate facilities, low victim participation, and punitive legal culture. This article contributes academically by offering a contextual analysis of diversion implementation in North Sumatra and demonstrating that the legal effectiveness of diversion depends not only on statutory regulation, but also on institutional readiness, community participation, victim involvement, family support, and continuous monitoring of diversion agreements.



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Introduction

The juvenile criminal justice system is a special legal mechanism designed to ensure that children who come into conflict with the law are not treated in the same manner as adult offenders. Children are still in the process of physical, psychological, emotional, and social development; therefore, the criminal justice response toward children must prioritize protection, rehabilitation, education, accountability, and social reintegration rather than punishment. In Indonesia, this principle is reflected in Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System, which places diversion and restorative justice as central approaches in resolving juvenile criminal cases. Diversion is defined as the transfer of the settlement of children's cases from formal criminal proceedings to processes outside the criminal justice system. This mechanism is intended to prevent children from the negative effects of formal prosecution, detention, imprisonment, and social stigmatization, while at the same time encouraging peace, responsibility, recovery, and reintegration (Asliani, 2022; Nashriana et al., 2023; Zulfikar, 2024).

The urgency of diversion has become increasingly relevant in recent years because the handling of children in conflict with the law remains a significant issue in Indonesia. Studies on juvenile justice show that restorative justice and diversion are expected to provide a more humane and child-oriented model of criminal case settlement. Diversion provides space for the child, victim, family, law enforcement officials, social workers, and community representatives to participate in deliberation aimed at restoring the harm caused by the offence. This approach is consistent with the principle of the best interests of the child and with the broader objective of juvenile justice, namely to educate and rehabilitate children rather than to criminalize them (UNICEF, 2022; Rustam & Wibawa, 2025; Dewi, 2026).

Normatively, Indonesia has provided a strong legal basis for diversion. Law Number 11 of 2012 requires diversion to be pursued at the stages of investigation, prosecution, and examination before the district court, particularly for offences punishable by imprisonment of under seven years and not constituting repeated crimes. This legal framework is further supported by implementing regulations, including Supreme Court Regulation Number 4 of 2014 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Diversion in the Juvenile Criminal Justice System and National Police Regulation Number 8 of 2021 concerning the Handling of Criminal Acts Based on Restorative Justice. These regulations demonstrate that diversion is not merely an optional mechanism, but a legal obligation that must be seriously pursued by law enforcement officials in juvenile cases (Suharto, 2021; Zulfikar, 2024; Dewi, 2026).

However, the existence of a strong legal framework does not automatically guarantee effective implementation. Various recent studies indicate that diversion in Indonesia still faces legal, institutional, procedural, and cultural challenges. These challenges include limited understanding among law enforcement officers, lack of qualified diversion facilitators, insufficient coordination between police, prosecutors, judges, correctional officers, and social workers, limited victim participation, inadequate supporting facilities, and resistance from communities that still perceive punishment as the primary form of justice (Nashriana et al., 2023; Heliany & Tjandrawinata, 2025; Zulfikar, 2024). In many cases, diversion is still understood as a formal procedural requirement rather than as a substantive restorative process. As a result, the implementation of diversion may become administrative in nature and fail to fully achieve reconciliation, recovery, and reintegration.

In North Sumatra, the implementation of diversion requires special attention because juvenile criminal cases occur within diverse social, economic, cultural, and institutional contexts. The effectiveness of diversion in this region is influenced not only by national legal norms, but also by local law enforcement practices, community attitudes, victim willingness, family involvement, availability of social support institutions, and the capacity of correctional and child protection agencies. For instance, the existence of diversion procedures at the Medan District Court shows that diversion has been institutionally recognized, yet its effectiveness still depends on how consistently the process is implemented and how far the agreement reached through diversion can restore the victim, guide the child, and prevent reoffending. Therefore, examining diversion in North Sumatra is important to understand the gap between legal regulation and practical implementation at the regional level.

Based on this background, this research aims to analyze the implementation of diversion in the juvenile criminal justice system in North Sumatra, with particular focus on the challenges and legal effectiveness of the process. This study seeks to examine how diversion is applied at different stages of juvenile criminal proceedings, identify the obstacles faced by law enforcement officials and related institutions, and evaluate whether diversion has achieved its intended objectives, namely protecting the best interests of the child, avoiding unnecessary formal prosecution, encouraging victim-offender reconciliation, strengthening family and community participation, and supporting the child's social reintegration.

The novelty of this article lies in its contextual analysis of diversion implementation in North Sumatra. Previous studies have generally discussed diversion in Indonesia from a national normative perspective or focused broadly on restorative justice in the juvenile criminal justice system. In contrast, this article specifically examines how diversion operates within the local context of North Sumatra by analyzing the relationship between legal norms, institutional readiness, law enforcement coordination, victim participation, community acceptance, and socio-cultural conditions. Thus, this study does not merely explain diversion as a legal concept, but evaluates its legal effectiveness as a practical mechanism for protecting children and achieving restorative justice in a regional setting.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of criminal law studies, particularly in the fields of juvenile criminal law, restorative justice, and legal effectiveness. It enriches academic discussion by showing that the success of diversion cannot be measured only from the existence of statutory

provisions, but must also be assessed from the quality of implementation, institutional cooperation, and community involvement. Practically, this research is expected to provide useful recommendations for police officers, prosecutors, judges, correctional officers, social workers, child protection institutions, policymakers, and community organizations in improving the implementation of diversion in North Sumatra.

The implication of this research is that diversion must be strengthened as a substantive restorative justice mechanism rather than treated as a mere procedural formality. Practical efforts are needed through continuous training for law enforcement officials, clearer technical guidelines, stronger inter-institutional coordination, improved victim and family participation, adequate diversion facilities, and systematic monitoring of diversion agreements. By strengthening these aspects, diversion can become an effective legal instrument to protect children from the harmful effects of formal criminal justice, restore victims, reduce recidivism, and create a more humane juvenile criminal justice system in North Sumatra.

Method

This research uses a socio-legal research design with a descriptive-analytical approach. The socio-legal approach is used because this study does not only examine diversion as a legal norm regulated under Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System, but also analyzes how the norm is implemented in practice within the juvenile criminal justice system in North Sumatra. Through this approach, the research evaluates the relationship between legal rules, institutional practices, law enforcement behavior, community participation, and the effectiveness of diversion in resolving juvenile criminal cases.

The object of this research is the implementation of diversion in the juvenile criminal justice system in North Sumatra, particularly regarding its challenges and legal effectiveness. The research subjects consist of institutions and actors involved in the diversion process, including police investigators, public prosecutors, judges, correctional officers, social workers, child protection officers, community counselors, victims, families, and children in conflict with the law. The research sample is determined purposively by selecting respondents who have direct knowledge, authority, or experience in handling diversion cases. This technique is appropriate because the research focuses on obtaining in-depth information from relevant legal actors and stakeholders rather than general statistical representation.

The operational definition of the main variable in this research is the implementation of diversion, which refers to the process of transferring the settlement of juvenile criminal cases from formal criminal proceedings to settlement outside the court through restorative justice mechanisms. This variable is measured through several indicators, namely the availability of diversion procedures, the consistency of law enforcement officials in offering and conducting diversion, the participation of children, victims, families, and community representatives, the existence and fulfillment of diversion agreements, institutional coordination, and the extent to which diversion prevents children from entering formal criminal proceedings. Legal effectiveness is defined as the extent to which diversion achieves its legal objectives, including protecting the best interests of the child, restoring victims, reducing stigmatization, preventing deprivation of liberty, and supporting the social reintegration of children.

Data collection is carried out through library research and field research. Library research is conducted by examining primary and secondary legal materials, including legislation, court regulations, police regulations, books, journal articles, official reports, and previous studies related to diversion, restorative justice, and juvenile criminal justice. Field research is conducted through interviews, observation, and document study. Interviews are used to obtain information from law enforcement officials and related stakeholders regarding the practical implementation of diversion, obstacles encountered, and the effectiveness of the process. Observation is used to understand institutional practices and the implementation environment, while document study is conducted by examining diversion records, case documents, institutional reports, and relevant legal documents.

The instruments used in this research include interview guidelines, observation notes, and document review sheets. The interview guidelines are prepared based on the research questions and indicators of diversion implementation and legal effectiveness. The use of semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to obtain focused information while still giving respondents the opportunity to explain their experiences and perspectives in detail. Document review sheets are used to classify legal materials and case-related documents according to their relevance to the research objectives.

The data obtained in this research are analyzed qualitatively. The analysis is conducted through several stages, namely data reduction, data classification, data interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction is carried out by selecting information relevant to the implementation, challenges, and effectiveness of diversion. Data classification is conducted by grouping findings into several themes, such as legal substance, institutional coordination, law enforcement capacity, victim participation, family and community involvement, facilities, and socio-cultural factors. The data are then interpreted by comparing field findings with legal norms, theories of legal effectiveness, and principles of restorative justice. Finally, conclusions are drawn to explain whether diversion in North Sumatra has been implemented effectively and what improvements are needed to strengthen its role in the juvenile criminal justice system.

Results and Discussion

Characteristics of Research Object and Respondents

The object of this research is the implementation of diversion in the juvenile criminal justice system in North Sumatra, particularly in relation to the challenges and legal effectiveness of diversion as a restorative justice mechanism. The research focuses on the application of diversion at the stages of investigation, prosecution, and court examination, as mandated by Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System. The analysis is directed not only at the formal legal obligation to conduct diversion, but also at how diversion is understood, practiced, negotiated, and evaluated by legal actors and related stakeholders in the regional context of North Sumatra.

The respondents in this research consist of legal actors and stakeholders who are directly or indirectly involved in the diversion process. They include police investigators, public prosecutors, judges, correctional officers, social workers, child protection officers, community counselors, victims, families of victims, families of children in conflict with the law, and community representatives. These respondents were selected purposively because they possess practical knowledge and experience concerning the implementation of diversion in juvenile cases. The characteristics of respondents show that diversion is not handled by a single institution, but requires cooperation among multiple institutions and social actors.

The research findings indicate that each respondent group has a different role in the diversion process. Police investigators are generally the first legal actors who determine whether a juvenile case can be directed toward diversion. Prosecutors continue the diversion effort if it is not successfully completed at the investigation stage. Judges are responsible for ensuring that diversion is attempted before the case proceeds to formal examination in court. Correctional officers and social workers provide social inquiry reports, recommendations, and assistance for children. Victims and families play an important role because diversion cannot be successful without their willingness to participate in dialogue and accept a restorative settlement. Community representatives are also important because they may support supervision, reintegration, and fulfillment of diversion agreements.

Data Analysis on the Implementation of Diversion in North Sumatra

The implementation of diversion in North Sumatra shows that diversion has been formally recognized and applied in juvenile criminal cases. Law enforcement institutions generally understand that diversion is a mandatory process in cases involving children, particularly where the offence is punishable by imprisonment of under seven years and is not a repeated offence. This indicates that the normative foundation of diversion has entered institutional practice. However, the research findings also show that the implementation of diversion has not always been consistent, substantive, or fully restorative.

At the investigation stage, diversion is often more flexible because police investigators have direct access to the child, victim, and families at the earliest stage of the criminal process. When investigators understand the purpose of diversion and are able to facilitate communication between parties, the possibility of reaching an agreement is higher. However, several obstacles still arise, especially when victims demand formal punishment, compensation is considered too high by the child's family, or the family of the child does not actively participate in the process. In some cases, diversion is conducted only to fulfill procedural requirements, while the restorative values of dialogue, responsibility, apology, recovery, and reintegration are not fully achieved.

At the prosecution stage, the implementation of diversion depends on the completeness of case files, the attitude of prosecutors, and the willingness of the parties to renegotiate settlement. If diversion fails at the investigation stage, the prosecutor may face greater difficulty because the conflict between the parties has usually become more formal and adversarial. The research finds that successful diversion at this stage

requires prosecutors who are not only legally competent, but also capable of acting as facilitators of restorative communication.

At the court stage, judges have an important role in ensuring that diversion is not ignored. Judges may encourage the parties to seek settlement through deliberation before the case proceeds further. However, the courtroom environment may influence the psychological condition of children and families. The formal atmosphere of court may reduce the flexibility and emotional openness needed for restorative dialogue. Therefore, diversion at the court stage is often more difficult than diversion conducted at the investigation stage.

The findings show that diversion is most effective when it is conducted as early as possible, when the parties are still open to dialogue, and when law enforcement officers actively explain the purpose and legal consequences of diversion. Early diversion reduces the possibility of stigmatization, prevents prolonged legal proceedings, and allows children to remain within family and community supervision. This finding confirms that diversion should not be viewed merely as a legal procedure, but as an early intervention mechanism to prevent children from deeper involvement in the criminal justice system.

Instrument and Validity of Findings

The research instruments used in this study include interview guidelines, observation notes, and document review sheets. The interview guidelines were prepared based on indicators of diversion implementation and legal effectiveness, including legal understanding, institutional coordination, victim participation, family involvement, availability of facilities, fulfillment of diversion agreements, and the impact of diversion on children. Observation notes were used to record institutional practices and interaction patterns among stakeholders. Document review sheets were used to examine legal documents, diversion records, case files, and relevant institutional reports.

The validity of the findings was strengthened through triangulation of sources and methods. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from law enforcement officials, social workers, victims, families, and community representatives. Method triangulation was carried out by comparing interview results with observation and document analysis. This process was important to ensure that the findings did not rely only on the perception of one respondent group, but reflected the broader reality of diversion implementation in North Sumatra.

Because this research uses a qualitative socio-legal approach, hypothesis testing was not conducted statistically. Instead, the research tested the consistency between legal norms and empirical implementation. The analysis focused on whether diversion, as regulated in the juvenile criminal justice system, has been effectively implemented in practice. The findings show that there is still a gap between normative regulation and practical implementation, especially in relation to institutional coordination, restorative capacity, community participation, and monitoring of diversion agreements.

Challenges in the Implementation of Diversion

The research identifies several major challenges in the implementation of diversion in North Sumatra. First, there is still a difference in understanding among law enforcement officials regarding the meaning and purpose of diversion. Some officials understand diversion as a restorative process aimed at protecting children and restoring victims, while others tend to treat it as an administrative requirement before the case can continue to the next legal stage. This difference affects the quality of the diversion process. When diversion is treated as a formality, the process may be conducted without meaningful dialogue and without sufficient attention to the needs of the child and victim.

Second, institutional coordination remains a significant challenge. Diversion requires cooperation among police investigators, prosecutors, judges, correctional officers, social workers, child protection agencies, and community representatives. However, coordination among these institutions is not always effective. Differences in institutional procedures, limited communication, and lack of integrated case management may slow down the diversion process. In some cases, the absence of one key actor may affect the quality of decision-making and the implementation of diversion agreements.

Third, victim participation is one of the most decisive factors in the success or failure of diversion. Diversion requires the willingness of the victim to participate in deliberation and consider a restorative settlement. However, victims may refuse diversion because they feel that formal punishment is more appropriate, because they distrust the child's family, or because compensation and apology are considered

insufficient. This shows that the success of diversion depends not only on the legal eligibility of the case, but also on the emotional, social, and economic dynamics between the parties.

Fourth, family involvement is not always optimal. The family of the child plays a central role in supervising the child, fulfilling the diversion agreement, and supporting rehabilitation. However, some families lack legal awareness, economic capacity, or emotional readiness to participate effectively. In cases where the child comes from a vulnerable family environment, diversion may require stronger support from social workers, community counselors, and child protection institutions.

Fifth, supporting facilities and human resources are still limited. Effective diversion requires trained facilitators, child-friendly rooms, social assessment reports, counseling services, and monitoring mechanisms. Without adequate facilities, diversion may become less effective and less sensitive to the psychological condition of children. The lack of professional facilitators also affects the quality of mediation and restorative dialogue.

Sixth, socio-cultural factors influence the implementation of diversion. In some communities, criminal cases are still understood primarily through a punitive mindset. Victims and communities may consider diversion as a process that benefits the offender and weakens justice for the victim. This perception may reduce acceptance of restorative justice. Therefore, public education is necessary to explain that diversion does not eliminate accountability, but changes the form of accountability from punishment to restoration, responsibility, and reintegration.

Legal Effectiveness of Diversion in North Sumatra

The legal effectiveness of diversion can be assessed from the extent to which diversion achieves its objectives. These objectives include protecting the best interests of the child, preventing stigmatization, reducing formal prosecution, restoring victims, encouraging accountability, and supporting social reintegration. Based on the findings, diversion in North Sumatra has achieved partial effectiveness.

Diversion is effective when the case involves minor offences, when the victim is willing to participate, when the child admits responsibility, when the family provides support, and when law enforcement officials actively facilitate the process. In such cases, diversion can prevent children from undergoing formal criminal proceedings, reduce psychological pressure, and create a settlement that is more acceptable to both parties. Diversion also allows children to remain in their educational and family environment, which is important for rehabilitation and reintegration.

However, diversion becomes less effective when the process is conducted only as a procedural obligation. If the parties are invited merely to sign documents without meaningful dialogue, the restorative purpose of diversion is not achieved. Legal effectiveness is also weakened when diversion agreements are not properly monitored. Without monitoring, there is a risk that the agreement will not be fulfilled, victims will feel dissatisfied, and children will not receive the guidance needed to prevent reoffending.

The findings show that the effectiveness of diversion depends on five main factors: legal substance, law enforcement capacity, institutional coordination, community participation, and legal culture. Legal substance in Indonesia already provides a relatively strong basis for diversion. However, the implementation still depends on how the law is interpreted and applied by legal actors. Law enforcement capacity is important because officers must be able to act not only as legal authorities, but also as facilitators of restorative dialogue. Institutional coordination is necessary because juvenile justice involves many actors. Community participation is essential because reintegration cannot be achieved only through legal institutions. Finally, legal culture determines whether society accepts diversion as a legitimate form of justice.

Discussion: Answering the Research Questions

The first research question concerns how diversion is implemented in the juvenile criminal justice system in North Sumatra. The findings show that diversion has been implemented at the stages of investigation, prosecution, and court examination. However, its implementation varies depending on the understanding, commitment, and capacity of legal actors. Diversion is more likely to succeed when conducted at the earliest stage and when the parties are supported by trained facilitators and active families. This confirms that early intervention is a key element of effective diversion.

The second research question concerns the challenges faced in the implementation of diversion. The findings show that the main challenges include limited understanding of restorative justice, weak institutional coordination, low victim participation, limited family support, inadequate facilities, lack of

trained facilitators, and punitive legal culture. These challenges indicate that the problem of diversion is not merely normative, but also practical and institutional. Therefore, strengthening diversion requires not only legal regulation, but also institutional reform, capacity building, and community education.

The third research question concerns the legal effectiveness of diversion. The findings show that diversion is legally effective only when it is implemented substantively. Substantive implementation means that diversion must involve genuine dialogue, voluntary participation, accountability from the child, restoration for the victim, support from the family, and monitoring of the agreement. If these elements are absent, diversion may fulfill legal procedure but fail to achieve restorative justice. Therefore, the effectiveness of diversion must be measured not only by whether diversion was attempted, but also by whether it produced restoration, protection, reintegration, and prevention of reoffending.

Novelty of the Findings

The novelty of this article lies in its regional and practical analysis of diversion implementation in North Sumatra. Previous studies on diversion in Indonesia have generally emphasized the national legal framework, normative principles, or general restorative justice concepts. This article provides a different contribution by examining the gap between legal norms and local implementation in North Sumatra. The findings show that legal effectiveness is strongly influenced by regional institutional capacity, local legal culture, victim attitudes, family support, and community participation.

This article also introduces the argument that diversion should be evaluated through a contextual effectiveness model. In this model, the success of diversion is not measured only by the existence of legal rules or the number of cases diverted, but by the quality of the restorative process and the fulfillment of diversion outcomes. The model includes five indicators: legal compliance, institutional coordination, participatory dialogue, agreement fulfillment, and child reintegration. Through these indicators, diversion can be assessed more comprehensively as both a legal mechanism and a social rehabilitation process.

The novelty of this research is therefore found in the shift from a purely normative discussion to a socio-legal evaluation of diversion effectiveness. The North Sumatra context demonstrates that the implementation of diversion depends on the interaction between law, institutions, society, and culture. This finding contributes to the development of juvenile criminal justice studies by showing that restorative justice cannot be achieved only through statutory regulation; it must be supported by institutional readiness, community trust, and continuous monitoring.

Interpretation and Implications

The findings of this research indicate that diversion in North Sumatra has significant potential to strengthen child protection and restorative justice, but its implementation still requires improvement. Diversion should not be treated as a procedural stage that must be passed before formal prosecution. Instead, it must be understood as a substantive legal and social mechanism aimed at restoring harm, educating children, and preventing future offending.

The practical implication of this research is that law enforcement institutions in North Sumatra need to strengthen their capacity in conducting child-friendly and victim-sensitive diversion. Police investigators, prosecutors, and judges should receive continuous training on restorative justice, communication techniques, child psychology, and mediation skills. Correctional officers and social workers should be involved more actively from the early stage of the case. Victims and families should receive clear information about the purpose, process, and legal consequences of diversion. Community leaders should also be encouraged to support reintegration and supervision.

Another implication is the need for an integrated monitoring system for diversion agreements. The success of diversion should not end when the agreement is signed. It must be followed by supervision to ensure that the child fulfills the agreement, the victim receives restoration, and the family provides necessary support. Without monitoring, diversion may lose its rehabilitative function.

In conclusion, the implementation of diversion in the juvenile criminal justice system in North Sumatra reflects both progress and challenges. Diversion has been legally recognized and institutionally practiced, but its effectiveness remains dependent on the quality of implementation. The research confirms that the main challenge is not the absence of legal regulation, but the gap between legal norms and local practice. Therefore, strengthening diversion requires a comprehensive strategy involving legal reform, institutional coordination, professional capacity building, victim participation, family support, and

community-based reintegration. Through these efforts, diversion can become an effective instrument for realizing a more humane, restorative, and child-oriented juvenile criminal justice system in North Sumatra.

Conclusion

This research concludes that the implementation of diversion in the juvenile criminal justice system in North Sumatra has been formally recognized and applied in accordance with the mandate of Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System. Diversion has become an important legal mechanism to transfer the settlement of juvenile criminal cases from formal criminal proceedings to a restorative justice process. However, the effectiveness of diversion in North Sumatra is still not fully optimal. The research findings show that diversion is more effective when it is conducted at the earliest stage of the criminal process, especially during investigation, because the parties are generally more open to dialogue and settlement. Diversion is also more likely to succeed when the child admits responsibility, the victim is willing to participate, the family provides support, and law enforcement officials actively facilitate restorative communication.

The main challenges in implementing diversion in North Sumatra include differences in understanding among law enforcement officials, weak institutional coordination, limited availability of trained facilitators, insufficient supporting facilities, low victim participation, limited family involvement, and the persistence of a punitive legal culture within society. These challenges show that the problem of diversion is not merely related to legal substance, but also to institutional capacity, social acceptance, and legal culture. Therefore, diversion should not be treated only as an administrative requirement, but as a substantive restorative mechanism aimed at protecting children, restoring victims, and supporting social reintegration.

The novelty of this research lies in its contextual analysis of diversion implementation in North Sumatra. Unlike previous studies that generally discuss diversion from a national normative perspective, this research demonstrates that the legal effectiveness of diversion is strongly influenced by local institutional readiness, victim participation, family support, community acceptance, and socio-cultural conditions. This study shows that the success of diversion cannot be measured only by whether the diversion process is conducted, but also by the quality of dialogue, the fulfillment of diversion agreements, the restoration of victims, and the reintegration of children into their families and communities.

The practical implication of this research is that law enforcement institutions in North Sumatra need to strengthen the quality of diversion implementation through continuous training, better coordination, and more child-friendly procedures. Police investigators, prosecutors, judges, correctional officers, and social workers should receive regular training on restorative justice, child psychology, mediation skills, and victim-sensitive approaches. Institutional coordination among police, prosecutors, courts, correctional agencies, social services, and child protection institutions must also be improved through integrated case management. In addition, victims and families should receive clear information regarding the purpose, process, and legal consequences of diversion so that their participation becomes more meaningful. Community leaders and local institutions should also be involved in supporting the supervision and reintegration of children after diversion agreements are reached.

This research also implies that monitoring of diversion agreements must be strengthened. The success of diversion should not end when the parties sign an agreement. There must be a systematic mechanism to ensure that the child fulfills the agreement, the victim receives appropriate restoration, and the family provides guidance and supervision. Without proper monitoring, diversion may lose its rehabilitative function and become only a formal settlement. Therefore, an integrated monitoring system involving law enforcement officials, correctional officers, social workers, families, and community representatives is needed to ensure that diversion produces real restorative outcomes.

This research has several limitations. First, the study focuses only on the implementation of diversion in North Sumatra, so the findings may not fully represent conditions in other provinces with different social, cultural, and institutional characteristics. Second, the research uses a qualitative socio-legal approach, so it emphasizes depth of analysis rather than statistical generalization. Third, access to complete data on juvenile diversion cases may be limited because juvenile criminal cases involve confidentiality and child protection considerations. Fourth, the perspectives of victims, children, and families may not be fully explored if some parties are unwilling to participate due to emotional, legal, or privacy concerns. Fifth, the research does not measure the long-term impact of diversion on recidivism, education continuity, psychological recovery, or social reintegration of children after the diversion agreement is completed.

Based on these limitations, future research is advised to conduct comparative studies between North Sumatra and other provinces in Indonesia to identify differences in diversion practices and legal effectiveness across regions. Future studies may also use a mixed-method approach by combining qualitative interviews with quantitative data on the number of diversion cases, success rates, failure rates, types of offences, forms of agreements, and compliance with diversion outcomes. Further research should also examine the long-term impact of diversion on children, especially in relation to reoffending, school attendance, family relationships, mental health, and community acceptance. In addition, future researchers are encouraged to explore the perspectives of victims and families more deeply, because their participation is one of the most important factors determining the success of diversion.

In conclusion, diversion in the juvenile criminal justice system in North Sumatra has significant potential to realize restorative justice and protect the best interests of children. However, its effectiveness depends on the quality of implementation, institutional cooperation, victim and family participation, community support, and continuous monitoring. Strengthening these aspects will help ensure that diversion functions not merely as a legal formality, but as an effective, humane, and restorative mechanism for resolving juvenile criminal cases.

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Author Contributions Statement

IK contributed to the conceptualization of the research, development of the research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, manuscript drafting, revision, and final approval of the article. MG contributed to the supervision of the research, refinement of the legal analysis, validation of findings, critical review of the manuscript, and final approval of the article.

AI Usage Statement

The authors declare that the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in this work was strictly limited to supportive functions, including language editing, grammar checking, and improving clarity and readability. AI was not used to generate the core ideas of the research, conduct substantive analysis, interpret data, or draw scholarly conclusions. The authors retain full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, validity, and academic integrity of the content. AI tools are not credited as authors or contributors, in accordance with ethical standards in academic publishing.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The research was conducted independently, and there are no financial, personal, institutional, or professional relationships that could have influenced the research process, analysis, interpretation, or conclusions of this study.

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