



Reform of the Restorative Justice System for Cross-Age Offenders at Lapas Tanjung Gusta

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the reform of the restorative justice system for cross-age offenders at Class I Medan Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution using a socio-legal and empirical juridical approach. The research applies Lawrence M. Friedman's legal system theory, focusing on legal substance, legal structure, and legal culture. Data were collected through interviews with inmates and correctional officers, supported by statutory regulations, correctional documents, and scientific literature during the 2025–2026 observation period. The findings show that restorative justice has been implemented at pre-adjudication and post-adjudication stages through settlement mechanisms and social reintegration programs. However, overcrowding, limited institutional capacity, and elderly inmates' vulnerabilities hinder optimal implementation. This study proposes an integrative restorative justice reform model to strengthen correctional reintegration and develop a more humane correctional system.

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of restorative justice within the Indonesian criminal justice system has continued to experience normative development in recent years. The restorative justice approach has been introduced at various stages of criminal proceedings through policies of the police, prosecution service, courts, and correctional institutions as part of the national criminal law reform agenda. This development indicates that the orientation of punishment is no longer solely focused on retribution, but has gradually shifted toward restoring social relationships, strengthening offender responsibility, and promoting reintegration into society. Nevertheless, the practical implementation of restorative justice still faces various structural and administrative challenges that affect the consistency of its application. These conditions demonstrate that the reform of the restorative justice system remains a relevant necessity within the Indonesian correctional system.

From a theoretical perspective, restorative justice emphasizes the resolution of criminal cases through efforts to restore relationships among offenders, victims, and society by means of dialogue, responsibility, and mutual agreement (Zehr, 2015). This approach is considered highly relevant to the social character of Indonesian society, which has long recognized conflict resolution based on deliberation and reconciliation. Restorative justice is also understood as part of an effort to rebuild social balance disrupted by criminal acts (Syafri Tanjung & Harahap, 2023). Therefore, the reform of the restorative justice system possesses not only normative dimensions but also sociological and philosophical dimensions. In practice, the implementation of this approach cannot be separated from institutional readiness and adequate implementation mechanisms. Reforms unsupported by institutional preparedness may lead to inconsistencies in policy implementation. Consequently, systemic reform requires integration between legal regulations, institutional structures, and legal culture.

The urgency of such reform becomes increasingly evident in the administration of correctional institutions in Indonesia, which continues to face systemic overcrowding problems. Based on data from the Correctional Database System of the Directorate General of Corrections as of April 2026, the number of inmates in prisons and detention centers throughout Indonesia reached approximately 271,468 individuals, while the ideal national capacity was only around 146,260. These figures indicate that the national overcrowding rate remains approximately 85 percent. This overcrowding condition reflects the serious structural pressures still experienced within the correctional system. The excessive number of inmates negatively affects rehabilitation effectiveness, healthcare services, security, and the quality of inmates' lives within correctional institutions. Under such circumstances, a punishment orientation focused solely on imprisonment becomes increasingly difficult to maintain effectively. Therefore, restorative justice gains relevance as part of a more humane correctional system reform oriented toward social reintegration.

Overcrowding not only affects the administrative aspects of correctional institutions but also influences the substantive objectives of the correctional system itself. Fundamentally, the correctional system aims to rehabilitate offenders so they may realize their mistakes, improve themselves, and reintegrate healthily into society. However, overcrowding results in limited rehabilitation space, declining service quality, increasing potential conflicts among inmates, and greater risks to security and institutional order. These conditions demonstrate that conventional punishment systems overly oriented toward imprisonment possess limitations in addressing the challenges of modern correctional administration. In this context, restorative justice is no longer understood merely as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism but also as part of broader systemic reform within the punishment paradigm. Such reform requires mechanisms that are more responsive to the social conditions of inmates. Accordingly, the reform of the correctional system becomes closely associated with the effectiveness of restorative justice implementation.

Within the context of North Sumatra, the overcrowding problem possesses a higher level of complexity because the province is among the regions with the largest inmate and detainee populations in Indonesia. The high crime rate in Medan City and surrounding areas directly affects prison occupancy conditions. Class I Medan Correctional Institution at Tanjung Gusta has become one of the correctional institutions with the highest occupancy density levels in Indonesia. According to data from the Correctional Database System, the institution's ideal capacity is approximately 1,500 inmates, while the inmate population at the end of 2025 reached around 2,960 prisoners. This condition indicates an overcrowding rate of approximately 97.335 percent, nearly twice the ideal occupancy capacity. Such density certainly affects rehabilitation effectiveness and the implementation of correctional programs within the institution. This situation demonstrates that correctional system reform at Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution constitutes an urgent issue requiring further examination.

The government has undertaken various efforts to reduce overcrowding through the construction of new correctional facilities, institutional optimization, and the strengthening of social reintegration programs. Social reintegration programs have become one of the instruments considered relevant to the restorative justice approach at the post-adjudication stage. Through this mechanism, inmates fulfilling administrative and substantive requirements may serve the remainder of their sentences within society under the supervision of the Correctional Center. This policy not only aims to reduce prison overcrowding but also provides opportunities for inmates to gradually readapt to social life. From the perspective of restorative justice, social reintegration forms part of the process of restoring the social life and livelihood of inmates within society. Therefore, social reintegration programs occupy an important position within modern correctional reform. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of implementing such programs still requires deeper evaluation.

At Class I Medan Correctional Institution, the implementation of social reintegration programs has shown contributions toward reducing inmate populations. Correctional data indicate that the inmate population, which previously reached approximately 2,960 prisoners at the end of 2025, decreased during mid-2026. This decline demonstrates that social reintegration programs have contributed to reducing occupancy density within correctional institutions. However, the reduction has not fully resolved overcrowding problems because inmate numbers remain far above the ideal capacity. These conditions indicate that restorative justice implementation at the post-adjudication stage still faces implementation limitations. Such limitations are associated with administrative mechanisms, institutional readiness, and social factors affecting inmate reintegration processes. Therefore, systemic reform remains necessary to ensure that restorative justice implementation operates more optimally and sustainably.

Problems in the implementation of restorative justice at the post-adjudication stage are also related to the absence of policy differentiation for cross-age inmates. In correctional practice, social reintegration programs are generally provided based on administrative requirements and inmate behavior without special distinctions according to age groups. In fact, adult inmates, elderly inmates, and other age groups possess different rehabilitation needs, psychological conditions, and vulnerability levels. An overly uniform system risks neglecting the substantive needs of each age group within the correctional process. In this context, restorative justice reform requires approaches more adaptive to the characteristics of inmates. Such an approach is important because the objectives of correctional administration are not limited to sentence execution but also concern humane social recovery. Therefore, the issue of cross-age offenders becomes relevant within discussions of restorative justice reform in correctional institutions.

Special treatment for elderly inmates within current correctional practice remains generally limited to humanitarian remission for inmates who have reached a certain age and suffer severe health conditions based on medical recommendations. This policy demonstrates that differentiation based on age has begun to be recognized within the Indonesian correctional system. However, such regulation remains limited and has not yet been comprehensively integrated into restorative justice implementation at the post-adjudication stage. These conditions indicate that systemic reform has not fully addressed the substantive needs of cross-age inmates. In practice, social reintegration implementation remains more focused on fulfilling administrative requirements than on rehabilitation approaches based on inmate characteristics. This situation illustrates the need to evaluate the effectiveness of the correctional system in responding to inmates' social and humanitarian needs. Consequently, restorative justice reform requires a more contextual and multidimensional approach.

In addition to regulatory and age differentiation issues, the implementation of social reintegration programs also faces significant social obstacles. One of the most common problems in practice is the absence of family guarantors for inmates wishing to participate in social reintegration programs. This condition causes certain inmates to lose opportunities to participate in reintegration programs despite fulfilling behavioral requirements during imprisonment. As a result, inmates must serve their full sentences without undergoing gradual reintegration into society. In certain cases, attempts have emerged to identify guarantors outside the family environment by claiming fictitious familial relationships. Nevertheless, verification processes conducted by correctional institutions and Correctional Centers generally reveal inconsistencies within such data. This problem demonstrates that the effectiveness of restorative justice is determined not only by regulation but also by social support and society's readiness to accept former inmates.

Based on the foregoing discussion, the reform of the restorative justice system for cross-age offenders at Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution constitutes a relevant and significant issue for examination. Overcrowding problems, the limitations of conventional punishment approaches, the suboptimal differentiation of cross-age rehabilitation, and obstacles in implementing social reintegration demonstrate that the correctional system still requires substantive reform. Restorative justice at the post-adjudication stage has been implemented through various social reintegration programs; however, its implementation continues to face structural and administrative challenges. These conditions indicate that systemic reform cannot rely solely upon regulatory changes but also requires institutional strengthening and more adaptive social approaches. This study seeks to examine how restorative justice for inmates is implemented within correctional practice, particularly at the post-adjudication stage through social reintegration programs. Furthermore, this research aims to analyze various obstacles affecting the implementation of restorative justice for cross-age offenders, including regulatory, institutional, and social factors within inmate rehabilitation and social reintegration processes. Normative and empirical approaches are necessary to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of restorative justice implementation within the correctional system. Accordingly, this study is expected to contribute academically and practically toward correctional system reform and the strengthening of restorative justice in Indonesia.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Concept and Principles of Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is a criminal justice paradigm that emphasizes the restoration of social relationships rather than merely focusing on punishment or retaliation. This concept emerged as a critique of the retributive approach, which is considered to prioritize formal punishment over the restoration of social harm caused by criminal acts (Prasetyo, 2018; Menkel-Meadow, 2007). In modern criminal law, restorative justice views crime not only as a violation against the state, but also as a social conflict affecting offenders, victims, and society (Zehr, 2015; Rado, 2022). Therefore, criminal case resolution should not rely solely on

punishment, but also on efforts to repair disrupted social relationships. The restorative approach has developed as part of a broader reform toward a more humane and substantively just criminal justice system. In practice, restorative justice has been accommodated within various Indonesian criminal justice policies, although its implementation still differs among law enforcement institutions (Akbar, 2022; Zulkarnain, 2021). The primary characteristic of restorative justice lies in participatory dialogue involving offenders, victims, and society in equal positions to achieve mutual resolution. Consequently, restorative justice possesses not only juridical legitimacy through formal regulations, but also sociological and cultural legitimacy within Indonesian legal practice.

Lawrence M. Friedman's Legal System Theory

Lawrence M. Friedman's Legal System Theory views law not merely as a collection of written norms, but as a social system consisting of three major elements: legal structure, legal substance, and legal culture. Legal structure refers to institutions and law enforcement authorities responsible for implementing the law, legal substance refers to regulations and policies, while legal culture concerns social values, attitudes, and perceptions toward law. Friedman emphasizes that legal effectiveness is determined not only by regulations, but also by institutional readiness and supportive legal culture. In the context of restorative justice reform, this theory explains that restorative justice cannot function effectively if it relies solely on formal regulations. The successful implementation of restorative justice is also influenced by the institutional capacity of correctional institutions and law enforcement agencies, regulatory consistency, and social acceptance of restorative approaches. Therefore, Friedman's theory provides an important conceptual foundation for analyzing restorative justice reform from normative, structural, and cultural perspectives within the Indonesian correctional system

METHODOLOGY

This study employed an empirical juridical approach with a socio-legal perspective to analyze the reform of the restorative justice system for cross-age offenders within the Indonesian correctional system. The research was conducted at Class I Medan Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution, focusing on the implementation of restorative justice at the post-adjudication stage through social reintegration programs. This research used a descriptive qualitative method. Primary data were obtained through limited semi-structured interviews with selected inmates from different age groups, correctional officers, and parties involved in social reintegration programs using purposive sampling techniques. Secondary data were collected from correctional institution documents, correctional data, statutory regulations, and relevant scientific literature. Data were analyzed qualitatively through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The validity of the findings was maintained through source and technique triangulation to ensure the credibility of the research results.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Institutional Conditions and Characteristics of Inmates at Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution

Class I Medan Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution is a correctional technical implementation unit under the Directorate General of Corrections within the Ministry of Immigration and Corrections of the Republic of Indonesia, located in Medan City, North Sumatra. As a Class I correctional institution, it is designated for adult male inmates who have received final and binding court decisions and are serving criminal sentences under the Indonesian correctional system. Within the correctional framework, inmates are positioned as subjects of rehabilitation directed toward social reintegration through personality development and self-reliance programs. In the context of criminal justice reform, correctional institutions are no longer viewed solely as places of punishment, but also as institutions aimed at restoring the social life and livelihood of inmates within society. Institutionally, Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution performs functions related to security, inmate rights services, spiritual and mental rehabilitation, work training, and social reintegration programs. However, the effectiveness of these functions is strongly influenced by institutional capacity, human resources, and inmate population conditions. The overcrowding situation within the institution indicates that the correctional system continues to experience significant structural pressures in implementing rehabilitation and reintegration programs.

Based on correctional data, the ideal occupancy capacity of Class I Medan Correctional Institution is approximately 1,500 inmates. Nevertheless, by December 2025 the inmate population had reached around 2,960 prisoners, resulting in an overcrowding rate of approximately 97.33 percent or nearly double the intended capacity. Meanwhile, as of May 12, 2026, the inmate population slightly decreased to approximately 2,863 prisoners with an overcrowding rate of around 90.87 percent. These conditions demonstrate that imprisonment-oriented approaches continue to create systemic problems within correctional practice. Excessive inmate populations affect rehabilitation effectiveness, healthcare services, institutional security, supervision, and the quality of inmates' daily lives. In practice, overcrowding also limits institutional capacity in delivering more adaptive rehabilitation programs for inmates from different age groups and social backgrounds. Consequently, the institutional condition of Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution reflects broader challenges within the Indonesian correctional system regarding the implementation of restorative and rehabilitative approaches.

Table 1. Profile of Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution

Main Theme	Subtheme	Analytical Description
Institutional Status	Correctional Technical Unit	Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution operates under the Directorate General of Corrections within the Ministry of Immigration and Corrections of the Republic of Indonesia.
Correctional Orientation	Social Reintegration	The correctional system positions inmates as subjects of rehabilitation directed toward reintegration into society.
Organizational Structure	Institutional Functions	The institution performs security, rehabilitation, spiritual guidance, work training, and social reintegration functions.
Overcrowding Condition	Capacity and Occupancy	The ideal capacity is around 1,500 inmates, while the inmate population reached approximately 2,960 in 2025 and 2,863 in May 2026.
Structural Challenges	Institutional Pressure	Overcrowding affects rehabilitation effectiveness, healthcare, security, and inmate supervision within the institution.

The characteristics of inmates at Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution demonstrate a high level of heterogeneity in terms of age groups, criminal offenses, and sentence duration. Research findings indicate that productive-age inmates, particularly those aged between 30–39 years and 40–49 years, dominate the inmate population. However, elderly inmates also remain part of the correctional population and possess different social, physical, and psychological conditions compared to younger inmates. This cross-age inmate condition demonstrates that rehabilitation and social reintegration programs cannot be implemented uniformly for all prisoners. In addition, narcotics-related crimes constitute the most dominant offense category, followed by child protection offenses, murder, corruption, and theft cases. Such heterogeneity affects rehabilitation patterns, supervision mechanisms, psychosocial conditions, and opportunities for social acceptance after release. Several inmates also belong to recidivist groups who experience complex psychological and social dynamics during imprisonment, particularly due to prolonged interaction with the criminal justice system.

Sentence duration also significantly affects inmates' social conditions and reintegration readiness. Research data demonstrate that many inmates serve medium- to long-term imprisonment sentences, particularly within the range of 10–13 years and 14–17 years. Long-term imprisonment influences inmates' family relationships, psychological stability, and social adaptation capacities. In several cases, elderly inmates who have served lengthy prison terms experience difficulties obtaining family support as guarantors for social reintegration programs. This condition indicates that reintegration problems are not merely administrative issues, but are also closely related to inmates' social conditions after long periods of imprisonment. Therefore, the characteristics of inmates at Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution illustrate the need for more adaptive and proportional rehabilitation approaches within the framework of restorative justice reform for cross-age offenders.

Table 2. Characteristics of Inmates

Main Theme	Subtheme	Analytical Description
Age Distribution	Productive Age Inmates	Most inmates belong to productive age groups, especially those aged 30–39 and 40–49 years.
Cross-Age Conditions	Elderly Inmates	Elderly inmates require more adaptive rehabilitation and reintegration approaches due to physical and social vulnerabilities.
Criminal Offenses	Dominant Crime Types	Narcotics offenses dominate the inmate population, followed by murder, corruption, theft, and child protection cases.
Sentence Duration	Medium and Long-Term Sentences	Many inmates serve sentences ranging from 10–17 years, affecting their social and psychological conditions.
Social Dynamics	Recidivism and Reintegration	Some inmates experience repeated imprisonment and difficulties obtaining family support for reintegration programs.
Main Theme	Subtheme	Analytical Description

The Implementation of Restorative Justice Through Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration Programs

The implementation of rehabilitation and service programs at Class I Medan Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution is carried out as part of the Indonesian correctional system, which aims to prepare inmates to reintegrate into society after serving their sentences. In general, rehabilitation activities are conducted through two major approaches, namely personality development and self-reliance development. Personality development includes religious activities, moral education, legal awareness programs, and the formation of social responsibility among inmates. Meanwhile, self-reliance development is implemented through vocational and work-training programs intended to improve inmates' economic skills and social reintegration readiness. Normatively, the correctional system positions inmates as subjects of rehabilitation who are expected to return to society as responsible and productive individuals (Lukito & Sinaga, 2021). In practice, however, the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs is strongly influenced by overcrowding conditions, institutional capacity, the availability of facilities, and the quality of human resources within the institution. These conditions indicate that rehabilitation programs within correctional institutions are not solely administrative activities, but also constitute part of broader efforts to reform the correctional system toward a more rehabilitative and restorative orientation.

In addition to internal rehabilitation programs, restorative justice at the post-adjudication stage is primarily implemented through social reintegration programs within the correctional system. In the context of Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution, this approach is implemented through parole, conditional leave, and pre-release leave programs under the supervision of the Correctional Center. Through these mechanisms, inmates are permitted to serve the remainder of their sentences within society while remaining correctional clients who must comply with reporting obligations and social guidance. Within the correctional perspective, social reintegration programs are viewed as mechanisms to restore the social life, livelihood, and social relationships of inmates after imprisonment. Therefore, restorative justice at the post-adjudication stage is more oriented toward gradual social reintegration and supervised rehabilitation rather than direct criminal dispute settlement.

The implementation of social reintegration programs is conducted based on specific administrative and substantive requirements regulated within correctional policies. Parole may be granted to inmates who have served at least two-thirds of their prison sentences, demonstrated good behavior, and actively participated in rehabilitation programs. In practice, the Correctional Center plays a central role in conducting social research, supervision, and guidance for inmates participating in reintegration programs. The assessment process includes evaluating inmates' social readiness, family conditions, and the availability of guarantors who will assist the supervision process after inmates return to society. Research findings indicate that one of the most common obstacles in implementing reintegration programs is the difficulty of obtaining family guarantors, particularly among elderly inmates who have served lengthy prison terms or no longer maintain active family relationships. These findings

demonstrate that the implementation of restorative justice at the post-adjudication stage depends not only on administrative mechanisms, but also on social readiness and community support.

Table 3. Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration Programs

Main Theme	Subtheme	Analytical Description
Personality Development	Religious and Moral Guidance	Rehabilitation includes religious activities, moral education, legal awareness, and the development of social responsibility among inmates.
Self-Reliance Development	Work Training Programs	Vocational training programs are implemented to improve inmates' economic skills and reintegration readiness.
Post-Adjudication Restorative Justice	Social Reintegration Programs	Restorative justice is implemented through parole, conditional leave, and pre-release leave programs.
Role of Correctional Center	Supervision and Guidance	The Correctional Center conducts supervision, social research, and guidance for inmates receiving reintegration programs.
Reintegration Requirements	Administrative and Behavioral Conditions	Reintegration programs are granted based on sentence duration, behavioral assessments, and rehabilitation participation.
Implementation Obstacles	Family Guarantor Problems	Some inmates, particularly elderly prisoners, experience difficulties obtaining family guarantors for reintegration eligibility.
Correctional Reform Context	Restorative Justice Orientation	Social reintegration programs reflect restorative justice approaches emphasizing social recovery and gradual reintegration into society.

From a cross-age perspective, the implementation of restorative justice at the post-adjudication stage demonstrates that reintegration programs are generally applied uniformly without specific differentiation based on age groups. In practice, social reintegration eligibility is primarily determined by administrative requirements, inmate behavior, and social research assessments. Nevertheless, elderly inmates have begun to receive certain forms of special treatment through humanitarian remission policies for prisoners who reach specific ages and suffer severe medical conditions supported by medical recommendations. This condition indicates that age-based differentiation has gradually emerged within correctional practice, although it has not yet been comprehensively integrated into the broader restorative justice framework. Interview findings reveal that elderly inmates generally perceive reintegration

programs as more humane mechanisms compared to remaining imprisoned until full sentence completion. Meanwhile, productive-age inmates tend to view reintegration programs as opportunities to rebuild their social and economic lives after imprisonment. These findings indicate that inmates' age conditions and imprisonment experiences significantly influence how restorative justice is understood and experienced within the correctional system.

Regulatory and Implementation Gaps in the Restorative Justice System for Cross-Age Offenders

The findings of this research indicate that significant gaps still exist between the normative framework of restorative justice and its practical implementation within the Indonesian correctional system, particularly at Class I Medan Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution. Normatively, restorative justice has been accommodated through various regulations and institutional policies, especially at the pre-adjudication stage through peace agreements, compensation, termination of investigation, and termination of prosecution mechanisms (Wahid et al., 2022; Darusman et al., 2022). However, at the post-adjudication stage, restorative justice is primarily implemented through administrative reintegration programs such as parole, conditional leave, and pre-release leave. In practice, these programs focus more on administrative eligibility and behavioral assessment rather than direct restoration between offenders, victims, and society. Consequently, correctional institutions still function predominantly as sentence-execution institutions rather than comprehensive restorative spaces. The research also reveals that restorative justice implementation for cross-age offenders has not yet incorporated differentiated approaches based on inmate age groups, despite the different physical, psychological, and social conditions experienced by elderly inmates. Current special treatment for elderly prisoners remains limited to humanitarian remission policies, which are still administrative rather than substantively restorative. These findings demonstrate that restorative justice reform requires more adaptive and age-sensitive approaches within the correctional system.

Another major obstacle identified in this study relates to institutional capacity, overcrowding, and legal culture within the correctional system. Overcrowding conditions at Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution create structural pressures affecting rehabilitation effectiveness, supervision quality, healthcare services, and reintegration preparation. Excessive inmate populations limit institutional capacity to provide individualized rehabilitation programs responsive to diverse inmate characteristics. In addition, Indonesian legal culture still tends to position imprisonment as the dominant and most legitimate form of criminal punishment (Akuntari & Yogie Adha, 2025). Social reintegration programs also face social barriers, particularly regarding family support and public acceptance of former inmates. Several inmates, especially elderly prisoners who have served long-term sentences, experience difficulties obtaining family guarantors required for reintegration eligibility. Therefore, restorative justice reform requires not only regulatory improvement, but also institutional

strengthening, social support, and broader transformation of legal culture toward more humane and restorative approaches.

DISCUSSION

Socio-Legal Analysis of Restorative Justice in the Correctional System

A socio-legal analysis based on Lawrence M. Friedman's Legal System Theory demonstrates that the legal substance of restorative justice in Indonesia has developed progressively, particularly at the pre-adjudication stage through peace agreements, compensation, and case settlement mechanisms outside formal criminal proceedings (Wahid et al., 2022; Darusman et al., 2022). However, the findings of this study indicate that restorative justice at the post-adjudication stage has not yet been fully integrated into the correctional system as a comprehensive restorative mechanism. In practice, restorative justice at Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution is primarily implemented through social reintegration programs such as parole, conditional leave, and pre-release leave under the supervision of the Correctional Center. Although these programs contain restorative elements because they aim to prepare inmates for gradual reintegration into society, their implementation still focuses more on administrative requirements than on substantive social recovery between offenders, victims, and society. This condition demonstrates that the primary problem of legal substance is not the absence of regulations, but rather the lack of systemic integration between restorative justice at the pre-adjudication and post-adjudication stages. Therefore, restorative justice reform requires harmonization of legal substance capable of connecting restorative mechanisms throughout the criminal justice system.

From the perspectives of legal structure and legal culture, the findings reveal that the correctional system has normatively been designed to implement rehabilitation and social reintegration programs, yet its effectiveness continues to face major obstacles due to overcrowding, limited institutional resources, and administrative limitations. The implementation of reintegration programs is also highly dependent on family support and the readiness of society to accept former inmates, particularly elderly prisoners who often experience difficulties obtaining guarantors after serving long-term sentences. In terms of legal culture, inmates generally demonstrate positive acceptance toward restorative approaches because reintegration programs are perceived as more humane compared to full imprisonment until sentence completion (Hikmawati, 2020). Nevertheless, public perception still tends to position imprisonment as the dominant form of justice, causing social acceptance of former inmates to remain limited (Akuntari & Yogie Adha, 2025). These conditions indicate that restorative justice obstacles are not limited to regulatory and institutional factors, but are also closely related to broader social acceptance and support systems. Therefore, restorative justice reform for cross-age offenders should be directed toward strengthening institutional capacity, developing more adaptive reintegration mechanisms, and fostering a legal culture that better supports sustainable social recovery and reintegration.

Problems and the Direction of Restorative Justice Reform

The findings of this study indicate that restorative justice in Indonesia remains predominantly oriented toward the pre-adjudication stage, while its implementation at the post-adjudication stage is still largely administrative through social reintegration programs such as parole, conditional leave, and pre-release leave. Although these programs contain restorative values, they have not yet functioned as fully integrated restorative mechanisms within the broader criminal justice system. Therefore, restorative justice reform requires stronger integration between the pre-adjudication and post-adjudication stages, supported by institutional strengthening and more adaptive social reintegration mechanisms for cross-age offenders.

- a. From the institutional perspective, the correctional system already possesses reintegration mechanisms through parole, conditional leave, and pre-release leave programs. However, overcrowding, limited institutional resources, and dependence on family guarantors continue to reduce the effectiveness of social reintegration for inmates, particularly elderly prisoners.
- b. From the perspective of legal culture, inmates generally demonstrate positive acceptance toward restorative justice approaches because reintegration programs are viewed as more humane than full imprisonment. Nevertheless, public perception still tends to position imprisonment as the dominant form of justice, resulting in limited social acceptance of former inmates and difficulties in the reintegration process.

The Reform Model of Restorative Justice for Cross-Age Offenders

The reform of the restorative justice system for cross-age offenders at Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution cannot be implemented partially, but must be directed toward broader systemic reform within the Indonesian correctional system. The findings of this study indicate that restorative justice at the post-adjudication stage is currently implemented mainly through social reintegration programs such as parole, conditional leave, and pre-release leave under the supervision of the Correctional Center. Although these programs contain restorative values because they aim to restore inmates' social relationships and prepare them for reintegration into society, their implementation still faces structural and cultural obstacles, including overcrowding, limited institutional capacity, lack of age-based rehabilitation approaches, and insufficient family support for reintegration processes. These conditions demonstrate that restorative justice reform requires integration between legal substance, legal structure, and legal culture as formulated within Lawrence M. Friedman's Legal System Theory. Therefore, restorative justice should no longer be understood solely as a mechanism for dispute settlement at the pre-adjudication stage, but also as a comprehensive correctional approach oriented toward sustainable social recovery and reintegration.

From the perspective of legal substance, restorative justice reform should be directed toward harmonizing restorative mechanisms from the pre-adjudication stage to the post-adjudication stage within the correctional system. Social reintegration programs such as parole, conditional leave, and pre-release leave should be explicitly positioned as part of post-adjudication restorative justice aimed at restoring social relationships between inmates and society. In addition, age-based differentiation should be more operationally integrated into correctional policies, particularly for elderly inmates who possess physical, psychological, and social vulnerabilities different from productive-age inmates. From the structural perspective, correctional institutions and Correctional Centers require stronger institutional capacity, social supervision mechanisms, and rehabilitation approaches based on restorative justice principles. From the perspective of legal culture, restorative justice reform requires broader public understanding that the purpose of correctional institutions is not merely punishment, but also the preparation of inmates to return to society responsibly.

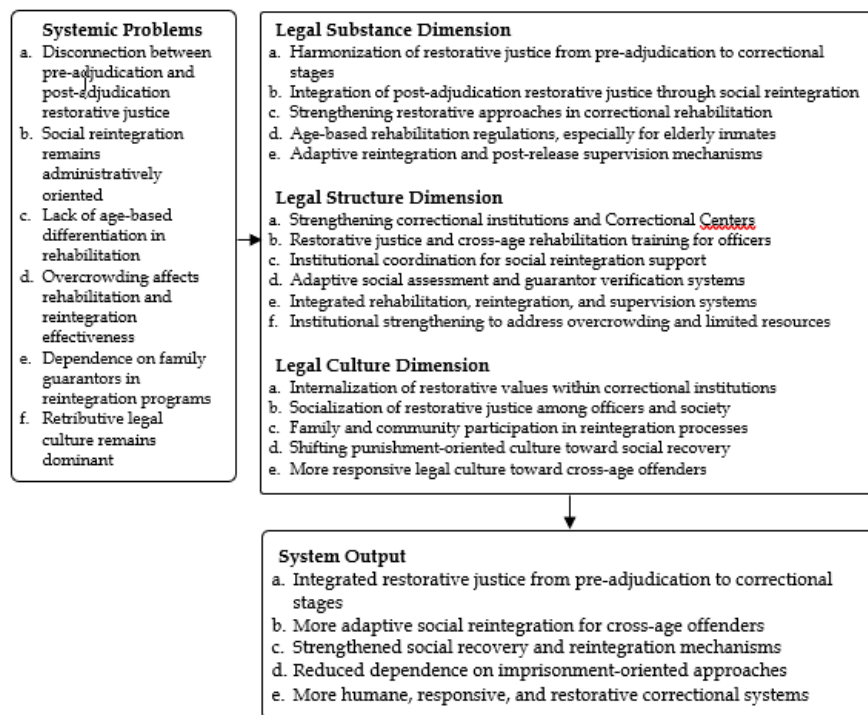


Figure 1. Reform Model of Restorative Justice

The proposed reform model therefore emphasizes the integration of restorative justice across all stages of the criminal justice system through harmonized regulations, adaptive institutional mechanisms, and supportive legal culture. The reform should also strengthen participatory rehabilitation, family involvement, and community acceptance in the reintegration process of former inmates. Through this integrated approach, restorative justice for cross-age offenders can evolve from an administrative reintegration mechanism into a more humane, adaptive, and socially restorative correctional system. Consequently, the reform model proposed in this study is expected to contribute both academically and practically toward strengthening restorative justice and improving the

effectiveness of the Indonesian correctional system in responding to the social realities of cross-age offenders.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study demonstrates that the implementation of restorative justice for inmates at Class I Medan Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution is primarily carried out at the post-adjudication stage through social reintegration programs such as parole, conditional leave, and pre-release leave under the supervision of the Correctional Center. Meanwhile, restorative justice at the pre-adjudication stage is generally directed toward peace agreements between offenders and victims, compensation mechanisms, and case settlement outside formal criminal proceedings. In correctional practice, the implementation of social reintegration programs for cross-age offenders has not yet shown significant differentiation based on age groups, as these programs are mainly determined by administrative requirements, inmate behavior, and sentence duration. Special treatment for elderly inmates remains limited to humanitarian remission policies for prisoners who have reached a certain age and suffer severe health conditions supported by medical recommendations. In addition, the findings reveal that one of the primary obstacles in implementing social reintegration programs is the limited availability of family support as guarantors, particularly for elderly inmates or prisoners who have served long-term sentences, causing them to remain imprisoned until the completion of their full sentence.

From a socio-legal perspective based on Lawrence M. Friedman's Legal System Theory, the problems of restorative justice implementation at Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution demonstrate inconsistencies among legal substance, legal structure, and legal culture. In terms of legal substance, restorative justice regulations have developed at the pre-adjudication stage, yet they have not been operationally integrated into the correctional stage. From the structural perspective, the social reintegration system continues to face obstacles related to overcrowding, limited institutional resources, and dependence on social guarantor mechanisms that are not yet adaptive to the conditions of cross-age offenders. Meanwhile, from the perspective of legal culture, restorative approaches have generally received positive acceptance from inmates, particularly elderly prisoners who perceive social reintegration as a more humane mechanism compared to full imprisonment. However, public acceptance of former inmates remains a significant obstacle in the social reintegration process. Therefore, the reform of the restorative justice system for cross-age offenders at Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution should be directed toward harmonizing restorative justice from the pre-adjudication to post-adjudication stages, strengthening the institutional capacity of correctional institutions and Correctional Centers, developing more adaptive social reintegration mechanisms for cross-age offenders, and fostering a legal culture that better supports social recovery and sustainable community reintegration.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This study is limited to the socio-legal analysis of restorative justice implementation at Class I Medan Tanjung Gusta Correctional Institution and primarily focuses on post-adjudication restorative justice through social reintegration programs. The research also relies on limited empirical interviews involving inmates and correctional officers without directly involving victims or broader community perspectives. In addition, this study does not conduct comparative analysis with other correctional institutions in Indonesia, which may produce different institutional and social dynamics. The findings therefore cannot be generalized to all correctional institutions within the Indonesian correctional system. Furthermore, this research has not examined the long-term effectiveness of social reintegration programs after inmates fully return to society. Future research is recommended to conduct comparative socio-legal studies across different correctional institutions, involve victims and community groups more extensively, and examine the sustainability of restorative justice reintegration programs for cross-age offenders in the long term.

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