

Effectiveness Of Criminal Enforcement Against Kreak In Juvenile Justice System Semarang Regency

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of criminal law enforcement against street children associated with the "Kreak" phenomenon in Semarang Regency within the framework of the Juvenile Criminal Justice System (SPPA). The research is grounded in the identified gap between Indonesia's child-centered juvenile justice norms, particularly diversion and restorative justice, and their inconsistent implementation in practice. Using a normative juridical method, this study analyzes primary legal materials, including Law No. 11 of 2012 on the Juvenile Criminal Justice System and Law No. 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code, supported by relevant legal literature. The findings indicate that law enforcement effectiveness remains limited due to inconsistent diversion practices, weak inter-agency coordination, insufficient rehabilitation and reintegration facilities, and a limited understanding of restorative justice among law enforcement officials. Social stigma and the complex socio-economic background of children further hinder reintegration efforts. This study emphasizes that effectiveness should be measured through rehabilitative outcomes rather than punitive indicators and recommends strengthening restorative justice training, harmonizing SPPA implementation with the Criminal Code, enhancing institutional coordination, and expanding community-based prevention and reintegration programs to ensure child protection and sustainable public safety.

Keywords

Kreak; Juvenile Criminal Justice System; Restorative Justice; Juvenile Delinquency

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's constitutional identity as a state governed by the rule of law, as affirmed in Article 1, paragraph (3), of the 1945 Constitution, imposes a clear obligation on the State to guarantee justice and legal protection for all citizens, including children (Bazemore & Schiff, 2015). Within the juvenile justice context, this obligation is inseparable from the recognition that children are rights-bearing subjects with



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inherent human dignity who require special protection due to their physical, psychological, and social vulnerability.

The protection of children is therefore not merely a moral imperative, but a constitutional and human rights mandate that requires the State to prevent violence and exploitation while ensuring that children who come into conflict with the law are treated in a manner that prioritizes rehabilitation and dignified reintegration into society (Braithwaite, 2016). This approach is consistent with the Human Rights Law and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, both of which emphasize that children's rights constitute fundamental human rights that must be safeguarded through shared responsibility among families, communities, and the State.

In recent years, Semarang Regency has experienced a troubling rise in nighttime street violence involving groups of adolescents commonly associated with the so-called "Kreak" phenomenon. This term has evolved from a social label into a marker of organized youth street violence, characterized by group mobility, the use of sharp weapons, and attacks on random road users (Braithwaite, 2016). Although the perpetrators are predominantly under the age of 18, their actions frequently involve serious physical harm and, in some cases, loss of life, generating widespread fear and undermining public safety. (Daly, 2016)

This phenomenon exposes a complex legal and policy dilemma. While the State is obligated to protect society from violent crime, it must also uphold children's rights and ensure that law enforcement responses remain consistent with juvenile justice principles (Nugraha & Putra, 2022). The "Kreak" phenomenon, therefore, cannot be understood solely as a social problem, but must be framed as a legal policy issue that tests the effectiveness of Indonesia's juvenile criminal justice system in addressing serious youth violence. (Goldson & Muncie, 2015)

The handling of children in conflict with the law in Indonesia is primarily governed by Law Number 11 of 2012 on the Juvenile Criminal Justice System (SPPA), which institutionalizes a child-centered approach grounded in restorative justice and prioritizes diversion (Lansdown, 2010). The SPPA reflects a normative commitment to rehabilitation rather than retribution, emphasizing accountability that is proportional to the child's capacity and sensitive to their social background. (Zehr, 2015)

However, the implementation of these principles in cases involving "Kreak"-related street violence reveals a significant gap between normative legal ideals and empirical enforcement practices. Many of the children involved in such cases are street children who lack stable family supervision, formal education, and official identification, making them difficult to reach through conventional diversion mechanisms and social rehabilitation programs (Tonry, 2019). These conditions complicate the

investigative and prosecutorial process and often result in responses that struggle to balance public order concerns with restorative justice obligations. (McCold & Wachtel, 2017)

This enforcement gap is further complicated by the evolving criminal law landscape following the enactment of Law Number 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code, which provides a broader framework for addressing violent and group-based crimes (Muncie, 2018). While the new Criminal Code offers substantive legal clarity, its interaction with the SPPA raises important questions regarding consistency, proportionality, and the limits of restorative justice when juvenile offending involves serious violence.

At the regional level, Semarang Regency has demonstrated normative commitment through various child protection and child-friendly governance regulations, including Regional Regulation Number 6 of 2014 on Child Protection, Regional Regulation Number 6 of 2019 on Child-Friendly Regencies, and Regent Regulations Numbers 18 and 19 of 2016 concerning integrated child protection services and inter-agency coordination.

Despite these regulatory frameworks, the continued increase in nighttime violence suggests that existing policies have not yet been fully effective in preventing youth crime or ensuring meaningful rehabilitation for children already involved in violent behavior. Against this background, the central issue addressed in this study is the effectiveness of criminal law enforcement against children involved in "Kreak"-related street violence in Semarang Regency within the framework of the SPPA.

This research examines whether restorative justice principles can be practically and normatively applied in cases involving serious violence and threats to public order. It identifies the institutional, legal, and social obstacles that hinder effective implementation. By focusing on the intersection between juvenile justice law, regional child protection policies, and empirical enforcement practices, this study seeks to contribute to the development of a more coherent and future-oriented juvenile justice system.

Ultimately, the study aims to provide legal policy recommendations that strengthen coordination between national and regional frameworks, enhance rehabilitative capacity, and ensure that criminal law enforcement against children is both effective in maintaining public safety and faithful to the constitutional mandate to protect children's rights and human dignity.

2. METHOD

This research applies a normative juridical method that focuses on the systematic study of written law in order to evaluate the effectiveness of criminal law enforcement in "Kreak" cases involving children in Semarang Regency (Soerjono & Mamudji, 2019). The study is grounded in doctrinal legal research, which examines legal norms, principles, and regulatory coherence rather than measuring behavior through field data (Dobinson et al., 2017). The Juvenile Criminal Justice System (Sistem Peradilan Pidana Anak/SPPA), as regulated under Law Number 11 of 2012, serves as the primary

analytical framework because it represents Indonesia's formal legal commitment to restorative justice, diversion, and the protection of children's rights in criminal proceedings.

This research is descriptive-analytical, meaning it does not merely describe legal rules but also critically analyzes their structure, purpose, and capacity to function effectively when applied to cases of juvenile street violence (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To provide conceptual clarity, the notion of "effectiveness" in law enforcement is explicitly defined using Soerjono Soekanto's theory of law enforcement effectiveness, which conceptualizes effectiveness as the interaction between several determining factors: legal substance (the clarity and consistency of norms), legal structure (institutions and law enforcement agencies), legal culture (attitudes and patterns of compliance), supporting facilities and resources, and the social environment. Within this framework, effectiveness in this study is understood as the extent to which the SPPA's restorative and rehabilitative objectives can be realized through criminal law enforcement mechanisms, particularly in cases involving organized violence committed by children.

The legal materials analyzed in this study are categorized into primary and secondary legal sources (Chynoweth et al., 2019). Primary legal materials include the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Law Number 11 of 2012 on the Juvenile Criminal Justice System, Law Number 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code insofar as it regulates violent and group-based crimes, and relevant regional regulations in Semarang Regency, such as Regional Regulation Number 6 of 2014 on Child Protection, Regional Regulation Number 6 of 2019 on Child-Friendly Regencies, and Regent Regulations Numbers 18 and 19 of 2016 concerning integrated child protection services and inter-agency coordination. Secondary legal materials consist of scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, legal commentaries, and doctrinal writings that discuss juvenile justice, restorative justice, diversion, child protection, and theories of legal effectiveness. Tertiary legal materials, including legal dictionaries and encyclopedias, are used to support terminological accuracy and conceptual consistency.

The analytical process is conducted through several structured stages (Tamanaha, 2017). First, the study undertakes a normative mapping of applicable laws to identify core principles, obligations, and procedural standards governing the handling of children in conflict with the law. Second, a harmonization analysis is conducted to assess the consistency between national and regional regulations, particularly regarding child protection policies and juvenile criminal justice procedures. Third, the study evaluates legal effectiveness using clearly defined indicators derived from SPPA objectives and Soekanto's theoretical framework. These indicators include: normative consistency, measured by the alignment between statutory provisions and the restorative justice orientation of SPPA; institutional coordination, assessed through the legal design of cooperation between police, prosecutors, courts, correctional institutions, social services, and local child protection agencies; and diversion

feasibility, evaluated by examining the legal conditions for diversion, the suitability of diversion mechanisms for different categories of offenses, and the availability of rehabilitation and reintegration support as mandated by law. Although this research is based on library research, these indicators allow a rigorous evaluation of effectiveness in legal-policy terms rather than empirical measurement.

All data in this study are collected through library research, involving the review, classification, and interpretation of primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials (Van Hoecke, 2015). The analysis employs statutory interpretation methods, including systematic and teleological interpretation, to connect legal provisions with their underlying objectives, as well as doctrinal analysis to clarify key concepts such as restorative justice, diversion, and child protection. By integrating an explicit theoretical framework, clearly defined sources, and structured evaluative criteria, this methodological design enables a comprehensive and systematic assessment of whether criminal law enforcement against children involved in "Kreak" cases in Semarang Regency is legally effective, coherent, and aligned with the fundamental principles of the Juvenile Criminal Justice System.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Effectiveness of Criminal Law Enforcement against "Kreak" in Semarang Regency within the Juvenile Criminal Justice System

The effectiveness of criminal law enforcement against children involved in the "Kreak" phenomenon in Semarang Regency must be assessed not merely by the existence of a comprehensive legal framework, but by the extent to which that framework operates coherently and achieves its normative objectives in practice. Using Soerjono Soekanto's theory of law enforcement effectiveness, this study evaluates effectiveness through the interaction of legal substance, legal structure, legal culture, supporting facilities, and social conditions. (Hidayat, 2019)

When these factors are applied to the handling of "Kreak" cases under the Juvenile Criminal Justice System (SPPA), it becomes evident that effectiveness remains limited and uneven. From a legal perspective, Indonesia's juvenile justice norms are highly progressive. Law No. 11 of 2012 explicitly prioritizes diversion and restorative justice, positioning criminal punishment for children as a measure of last resort (*ultimum remedium*). (Schwalbe et al., 2017)

Normatively, the law aligns with restorative justice theory as articulated by Zehr, which emphasizes repairing harm, involving victims and communities, and reintegrating offenders rather than stigmatizing them. However, the findings indicate a persistent gap between normative design and enforcement practice (King, 2017). In several juvenile street-violence cases in Semarang Regency, formal prosecution and adjudication remain the dominant response, even where the legal requirements for diversion are arguably fulfilled.

Secondary literature on SPPA implementation in several Indonesian regions similarly shows that diversion is often underutilized due to risk-averse institutional behavior and a preference for formal legality over restorative outcomes. In terms of legal structure, institutional coordination among police, prosecutors, courts, social services, and child protection agencies remains fragmented. Although Regent Regulations Nos. 18 and 19 of 2016 provide detailed technical guidelines for integrated child services, their implementation has not yet translated into a consistently coordinated enforcement mechanism. (Putri & Hidayat, 2020)

This fragmentation weakens restorative justice processes, which, according to Zehr, require active facilitation, inter-agency trust, and sustained follow-up. Without institutional synergy, diversion tends to become procedural rather than substantive, or is bypassed altogether in favor of court-based resolution. The legal culture surrounding juvenile crime further constrains effectiveness. Law enforcement officials often retain a punitive mindset, particularly when offenses involve violence or generate public fear (Day et al., 2018). This cultural orientation conflicts with the SPPA's rehabilitative philosophy and with Lansdown's child rights framework, which views children in conflict with the law primarily as rights-holders whose developmental needs must guide legal responses.

The persistence of this punitive culture explains why restorative justice is frequently perceived as incompatible with serious offenses, despite international and comparative evidence demonstrating that restorative approaches can be effective even in cases involving violence when supported by proper safeguards. From the standpoint of facilities and resources, implementing SPPA in "Kreak" cases is hampered by the limited availability of trained social workers, diversion facilitators, and community-based rehabilitation programs. (Schiff, 2015)

Article 86 of the SPPA mandates structured guidance and reintegration for convicted children. However, secondary studies on juvenile corrections in Indonesia indicate that post-adjudication programs often lack continuity and measurable outcomes (UNICEF, 2018). In Semarang Regency, the absence of sustainable reintegration mechanisms increases the risk of recidivism and undermines the rehabilitative goals of juvenile justice. Finally, social conditions, including poverty, school dropout, family dysfunction, and community stigma, significantly affect enforcement outcomes. (Case & Haines, 2016)

Many children associated with "Kreak" groups originate from marginalized backgrounds, making purely legal interventions insufficient. When enforcement focuses narrowly on procedural compliance rather than holistic recovery, the juvenile justice system fails to disrupt the structural drivers of delinquency (Daly, 2016). Taken together, these factors demonstrate that criminal law enforcement against "Kreak" under SPPA in Semarang Regency cannot yet be considered effective in achieving restorative, rehabilitative, and preventive objectives.

The limited effectiveness identified in this study reflects a broader structural challenge in translating progressive juvenile justice norms into operational reality. Although the SPPA Law represents a paradigm shift from retributive justice toward a restorative, child-centered model, such a transformation cannot rely solely on statutory reform (Henning, 2018). It requires institutional readiness, cultural change, and sustained political commitment. In the absence of these supporting conditions, juvenile justice norms risk functioning symbolically rather than substantively, particularly in cases involving street children and organized youth violence.

The underutilization of diversion in cases involving children associated with the “Kreak” phenomenon illustrates how legal discretion may unintentionally undermine child protection objectives (McNeill & Weaver, 2016). While diversion is formally mandated, its application in practice is often influenced by subjective risk assessments, public pressure, and perceptions of the seriousness of the offense. This discretionary imbalance undermines legal certainty and leads to inconsistent treatment of children in comparable situations, contrary to the principle of equality before the law (Tyler & Trinkner, 2017). Comparative experiences from other regions in Indonesia demonstrate that effective implementation of the SPPA is closely associated with institutional specialization and administrative design.

Jurisdictions that have established dedicated juvenile units, trained diversion facilitators, and clear inter-agency protocols tend to achieve higher diversion rates and more sustainable reintegration outcomes (Haines & Case, 2020). The absence of similar institutional arrangements in Semarang Regency suggests that enforcement challenges stem less from legal inadequacy than from governance and organizational priorities. Fragmented coordination among criminal justice institutions and social welfare agencies further constrains the effectiveness of juvenile law enforcement. (Bazemore & Schiff, 2015)

Juvenile justice inherently requires a multidisciplinary approach that integrates legal accountability with social intervention. When coordination mechanisms are weak or informal, children experience fragmented and discontinuous services, undermining restorative justice objectives and weakening long-term rehabilitation efforts (Doyle, 2019). The persistence of a punitive legal culture continues to shape enforcement practices, particularly in cases involving violence that attract public attention. Law enforcement responses often prioritize immediate public order considerations over rehabilitative outcomes, reflecting a deterrence-oriented mindset.

This approach conflicts with the SPPA’s rehabilitative philosophy and limits the potential of restorative justice to function as a meaningful alternative to formal prosecution. The perception that restorative justice is unsuitable for serious offenses also constrains its application in “Kreak” cases (Henning, 2021). International and comparative juvenile justice practices demonstrate that restorative

approaches, when supported by professional facilitation and clear safeguards, can address serious harm while promoting accountability and victim participation. (Nugroho & Prasetyo, 2019)

The reluctance to apply such approaches in Semarang Regency, therefore, reflects institutional caution rather than doctrinal incompatibility. Resource limitations significantly affect the quality and sustainability of juvenile justice interventions. The shortage of trained social workers, counselors, and community-based mentors restricts the capacity of diversion and rehabilitation programs to operate effectively. Without adequate human and material resources, restorative justice mechanisms risk becoming procedural formalities rather than transformative processes.

Post-adjudication reintegration remains a critical weakness in the current enforcement framework. Children who have completed legal proceedings often return to environments characterized by poverty, limited educational opportunities, and weak family support, without sustained supervision or guidance. This gap between legal resolution and social recovery increases the likelihood of recidivism and undermines the long-term objectives of juvenile justice. Socio-economic marginalization further highlights the limitations of criminal law as a standalone response to juvenile delinquency.

Factors such as poverty, school dropout, and family dysfunction operate as structural drivers of youth involvement in street violence. When law enforcement focuses narrowly on procedural compliance, it fails to disrupt these underlying conditions and risks reproducing cycles of marginalization. Taken together, these findings confirm that the effectiveness of criminal law enforcement under the SPPA must be understood as a systemic outcome rather than a procedural achievement.

Juvenile justice can only be considered effective when legal norms are supported by coordinated institutions, adequate resources, a rehabilitative legal culture, and social policies that address structural vulnerability. Until these conditions are realized, criminal law enforcement against children involved in the “Kreak” phenomenon in Semarang Regency will remain normatively progressive but operationally constrained.

3.2 Obstacles in Criminal Law Enforcement against “Kreak” within the Juvenile Criminal Justice System

The enforcement of criminal law against children involved in the “Kreak” phenomenon in Semarang Regency encounters multidimensional obstacles that significantly weaken the effectiveness of the Juvenile Criminal Justice System (SPPA). Although the normative framework of SPPA is comprehensive and progressive, its implementation is constrained by interrelated legal-operational, institutional, cultural, and socio-economic barriers that prevent restorative justice from functioning as intended. (Setiawan & Sari, 2021)

A central obstacle lies in the weak preventive and early identification mechanisms for street children. Many children associated with "Kreak" groups exist outside formal administrative, educational, and social welfare systems, making them invisible to authorities until they commit criminal acts (Zulfa, 2016). This reactive pattern contradicts the preventive mandate of child protection law and undermines diversion, which requires early intervention to be effective.

The absence of integrated child data systems and systematic outreach results in delayed legal responses, narrowing the opportunity for restorative solutions. Institutional barriers further compound this problem. Despite its mandatory nature, the SPPA's application remains inconsistent due to varying levels of understanding and commitment among law enforcement officials. Diversion is often perceived as a discretionary policy option rather than a binding legal obligation, particularly in cases involving violence. (O'Brien & Fitz-Gibbon, 2017)

This inconsistency erodes legal certainty and reflects a persistent punitive orientation within enforcement institutions (McVie & Norris, 2017). Moreover, coordination between police, prosecutors, courts, social services, and child protection agencies remains fragmented. Sectoral ego and institutional isolation prevent integrated case management and weaken follow-up mechanisms, which are essential for sustainable rehabilitation. (Van der Laan & Eichelsheim, 2017)

Cultural and social factors also play a critical role. A strong punitive legal culture continues to influence decision-making, particularly when juvenile offenses trigger public anxiety (Goldson, 2019). This approach conflicts with restorative justice theory, which emphasizes accountability through repair and reintegration rather than exclusion (Creaney, 2018). At the societal level, stigma against children labeled as "Kreak" constitutes a form of secondary victimization, limiting their access to education, employment, and social acceptance.

Such stigma undermines reintegration efforts and increases the risk of recidivism. Finally, socio-economic vulnerability represents the most structural obstacle (Ward et al., 2021). Many children involved in "Kreak" activities come from conditions of poverty, family dysfunction, and educational exclusion. Criminal law enforcement that operates independently of social welfare interventions cannot address these root causes. (Daly & Bouhours, 2016)

As a result, legal responses tend to be repetitive and cyclical, processing the same children without disrupting the underlying conditions that drive delinquency. Collectively, these obstacles demonstrate that the limited effectiveness of SPPA implementation in Semarang Regency stems not from normative deficiencies but from systemic weaknesses in enforcement capacity, coordination, and social integration.

The challenges faced by the juvenile criminal justice system in handling cases related to the “Kreak” phenomenon in Semarang Regency are fundamentally structural rather than incidental. The SPPA framework is built on the assumption of a preventive ecosystem capable of identifying at-risk children early and guiding them away from criminal behavior. When this ecosystem fails to function, intervention occurs only after harm has taken place, significantly narrowing the space for restorative justice, which is most effective before criminal labeling and social stigma become entrenched.

A major contributor to this problem is the absence of integrated data systems and coordinated outreach mechanisms. Without accurate and timely information on vulnerable children, law enforcement and social services are forced into reactive roles, recognizing children only once they enter the criminal process. This disconnect highlights a persistent gap between child protection policies and enforcement practices, weakening the preventive orientation of juvenile justice. Institutional inconsistencies further undermine effectiveness, particularly in the application of diversion. Although diversion is a central mandate of the SPPA, its implementation often depends on individual discretion rather than standardized institutional policy.

Combined with fragmented coordination among law enforcement agencies, social services, and educational institutions, this inconsistency disrupts continuity of care and reduces the system's ability to provide sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration. Cultural and resource-related factors also play a significant role. A lingering punitive legal culture, especially in cases involving violence, tends to prioritize deterrence and public order over rehabilitation. At the same time, the limited availability of trained social workers, counselors, and community facilitators weakens the practical implementation of restorative justice, reducing it to procedural formality rather than a transformative process.

Overall, the limited effectiveness of SPPA implementation in Semarang Regency stems from systemic weaknesses in coordination, resources, and social integration rather than deficiencies in legal norms. Effective juvenile justice requires not only progressive legislation but also coherent institutions, adequate support structures, and integration with broader social welfare and educational policies. Without these elements, criminal law enforcement against children involved in the “Kreak” phenomenon will remain reactive and fragmented, falling short of its rehabilitative and preventive goals.

3.3 Strategies to Strengthen Criminal Law Enforcement against “Kreak” within the Juvenile Criminal Justice System

Strengthening criminal law enforcement against “Kreak” within the SPPA framework requires a systemic, rights-based strategy that directly responds to the obstacles identified above (Lambie & Randell, 2019). Rather than emphasizing punitive escalation, effective reform must focus on institutional

capacity, legal coherence, and community engagement to ensure that restorative justice functions as a practical and credible response to juvenile violence (Tyler, 2016). At the institutional level, capacity building and coordination are essential. Continuous, standardized training for investigators, prosecutors, and judges must be prioritized to ensure a shared understanding of diversion and restorative justice as legal obligations grounded in child rights principles.

This training should be complemented by the establishment of formal inter-agency coordination mechanisms that integrate law enforcement, social services, educational institutions, and child protection bodies into a unified case-management system (Smith & Gray, 2019). Such coordination would enable consistent decision-making, reduce fragmentation, and ensure continuity from investigation through rehabilitation and reintegration (Umbreit et al., 2015). From a legal perspective, harmonization between SPPA and the principles introduced in Law No. 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code (KUHP) is necessary to maintain normative clarity.

Although SPPA remains *lex specialis* for juvenile cases, clear technical guidelines are required to align restorative and rehabilitation-oriented sanctions under the KUHP with SPPA's child-centered approach. Strengthening procedural clarity regarding diversion criteria, documentation, and follow-up responsibilities would further enhance legal certainty and uniformity in practice. Community-based strategies are equally critical. Preventive outreach and early intervention programs must be expanded through collaboration with local communities, schools, and civil society organizations to identify at-risk children before they enter violent peer networks.

At the same time, sustained public education initiatives are needed to reduce stigma and reshape societal perceptions of children who come into conflict with the law. Community acceptance and participation are indispensable components of restorative justice, as reintegration cannot succeed without social support. Finally, the effectiveness of these strategies must be ensured through systematic monitoring and evaluation. Assessment mechanisms should prioritize restorative and rehabilitative indicators such as diversion completion, educational reintegration, family reunification, and reduced recidivism rather than focusing solely on punitive outcomes.

Transparent and data-driven evaluation would enable continuous policy adjustment and reinforce public accountability. In essence, overcoming obstacles in the enforcement of criminal law against "Kreak" children requires a shift from fragmented and reactive responses toward an integrated juvenile justice system grounded in rehabilitation, dignity, and social inclusion. The true measure of effectiveness lies not in the severity of punishment, but in the system's capacity to guide vulnerable children away from violence and toward meaningful participation in society, in accordance with constitutional mandates and universal child rights principles.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the effectiveness of criminal law enforcement against street children associated with the "Kreak" phenomenon in Semarang Regency remains limited, not because of normative deficiencies, but due to weaknesses in implementation. Theoretically, Indonesia's Juvenile Criminal Justice System (SPPA) already reflects a restorative and child-centered model consistent with contemporary juvenile justice theory and child rights standards. However, empirical analysis of legal practice indicates a persistent gap between legal norms and enforcement reality.

Key findings show that diversion, designed as the primary mechanism to prevent criminalization, has not been applied consistently, institutional coordination remains fragmented, and resources and structured follow-up are insufficiently supportive of rehabilitation and reintegration mechanisms. These factors collectively undermine the rehabilitative orientation of SPPA and reduce its capacity to prevent recidivism among vulnerable children. From a policy perspective, this study highlights the need to shift from formalistic compliance to measurable legal effectiveness.

Effectiveness in juvenile law enforcement should be assessed through clear indicators, including the rate and quality of diversion implementation, the continuity of post-diversion or post-adjudication guidance, the level of inter-agency coordination, and reintegration outcomes such as school re-enrollment and reduced reoffending. Strengthening law enforcement capacity through mandatory restorative justice training, institutionalized coordination mechanisms, and adequate investment in social workers and community-based rehabilitation programs is essential to translating SPPA's normative ideals into operational practice.

Equally important is harmonizing SPPA implementation with the principles introduced in Law No. 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code, ensuring that rehabilitation-oriented sanctions reinforce rather than dilute the child protection mandate. This study also contributes theoretically by reaffirming that juvenile justice effectiveness cannot be measured solely through punitive outputs such as arrests or convictions, but must be evaluated through outcomes that reflect restoration, reintegration, and the protection of children's dignity. In this sense, criminal law enforcement against "Kreak" children should be understood as part of a broader child protection ecosystem that integrates legal intervention with social welfare, education, and community participation.

For future research, this study recommends a comparative regional analysis to examine how different local governments implement SPPA and manage diversion mechanisms, particularly in regions with lower recidivism or stronger community involvement. Further empirical research is also needed to evaluate diversion effectiveness using longitudinal data, including tracking post-diversion outcomes and reintegration success. Such studies would provide stronger empirical foundations for refining juvenile justice policy and ensuring that criminal law enforcement truly serves the best interests

of children while maintaining public safety.

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