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## The Justice Dilemma of Punishment and Rehabilitation in the Juvenile Criminal Justice System

Luciana<sup>1)</sup>, Rizki Tri Anugrah Bhakti<sup>2\*</sup>, Dwi Afni Maileni<sup>3</sup>, Indra Sakti<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Law, Universitas Riau Kepulauan, Batam 29425, Indonesia.  
[lucianabatam@gmail.com](mailto:lucianabatam@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Law, Universitas Riau Kepulauan, Batam 29425, Indonesia.  
[rizki.tri.ab@gmail.com](mailto:rizki.tri.ab@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Law, Universitas Riau Kepulauan, Batam 29425, Indonesia.  
[dwi.afni.maileni@gmail.com](mailto:dwi.afni.maileni@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup>Faculty of Law, Universitas Riau Kepulauan, Batam 29425, Indonesia.  
[indrasakti12680@gmail.com](mailto:indrasakti12680@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

*This study examines the justice dilemma between punishment and rehabilitation in the Juvenile Criminal Justice System (Sistem Peradilan Pidana Anak/SPPA) and formulates a more proportional legal reasoning standard for handling children in conflict with the law. The research employs a normative juridical method using statutory and conceptual approaches, supported by doctrinal analysis and relevant scholarship on retributive, rehabilitative and restorative justice. Legal materials are analyzed through systematic and teleological interpretation, as well as prescriptive legal argumentation, to assess the relationship between child protection, victims' interests and the legitimacy of punishment. The findings show that the central dilemma lies not in the existence of punishment or rehabilitation per se, but in the absence of consistent argumentative standards to determine when punishment may be justified and when rehabilitation should be prioritized. The study finds that punishment remains legally possible within SPPA, but its legitimacy must be strictly limited by necessity review, the ultimum remedium principle and proportionality. Conversely, rehabilitation and diversion should not be treated merely as policy preferences, but as normative priorities because they are aligned with the best interests of the child and social reintegration objectives. This study formulates an operational normative reasoning framework requiring law enforcers to assess the purpose of intervention, the availability of alternatives, procedural quality and the justificatory basis of decisions. These findings contribute to strengthening consistency in SPPA implementation and to developing a more accountable, humane and just juvenile justice practice.*

**Keywords:** Juvenile Justice System; Punishment; Rehabilitation; Diversion; Restorative Justice.

\*Penulis Korespondensi: Rizki Tri Anugrah Bhakti

E-mail : [rizki.tri.ab@gmail.com](mailto:rizki.tri.ab@gmail.com)

## INTRODUCTION

The Juvenile Criminal Justice System (SPPA) emerged from acknowledgment that minors in legal conflict are in a precarious developmental phase, necessitating a response from the state that differs from the adult justice system (Peraturan Mahkamah Agung Republik Indonesia Nomor 4 Tahun 2014, 2014; Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 11 Tahun 2012 Tentang Sistem Peradilan Pidana Anak, 2012). The child rights-based approach paradigm prioritizes the best interests of the child as the fundamental principle, asserting that limitations on children's freedom should be considered only as a last resort (Davies & Robson, 2016; General Comment No. 10 (2007): Children's Rights in Juvenile Justice, 2007).

In the public domain and law enforcement, calls for strictness are frequently motivated by a retributive rationale aimed at ensuring security, reinstating victims' sense of justice, and delivering a broad message of deterrence (Maswandi et al., 2023; Muchtar et al., 2024). Conversely, other research, such as that by Copeland et al (2023) and Hasibuan (2022) illustrates the justice in juvenile situations should be evaluated from a recovery and social reintegration standpoint to mitigate the likelihood of recidivism. Consequently, the Juvenile Justice System (SPPA) necessitates a more exact formulation of justice to reconcile the conflict between the principles of retribution-deterrence and those of recovery-rehabilitation.

The philosophy of punishment reveals a tension between the competing views of retributive-deterrent and rehabilitative-restorative theories. The restorative view refutes the idea that formal punishment equates to justice (Braithwaite, 2002; Menkel-Meadow, 2007) and stigma associated with the court process can exacerbate labeling and hinder access to education and social support (Gerry & Daniel, 2013; Sutiyoso, 2010).

The retributive perspective contends that the absence of real repercussions may undermine the legal system's normative authority and diminish victim protection (Carlsmith & Darley, 2008; Wenzel & Okimoto, 2016). The SPPA's issue lies not in binary decisions, but in establishing proportional and contextual criteria for assessing the justification of punishment and for prioritizing rehabilitation. This disparity illustrates the absence of a coherent normative framework for the SPPA in Indonesia.

The complexity of this topic is heightened when it is associated with ideas about child and adolescent development and criminal liability. Burke (2011) and Steinberg (2009) illustrates in the developmental psychology literature adolescents' abilities in self-control, risk evaluation and resistance to social influence are less stable than those of adults, necessitating a distinct assessment of children's responsibility. This discovery bolsters the rehabilitative argument, as actions focused on behavioral enhancement and social support are deemed more logical and more congruent with child protection objectives (Skeem et al., 2014).

However, this does not mean placing children in moral immunity that ignores victims and the need for prevention. Therefore, a more stringent normative formulation is needed to clarify the limits of the SPPA's (Child Protection and Rehabilitation Center) legitimacy to punish, ensuring it remains aligned with the principles of child protection, proportionality, and the public interest. Within the policy framework, the SPPA provides a diversion instrument and a restorative justice orientation to mitigate the criminogenic impact of the formal justice process, which is

then guided by technical regulations (e.g., diversion guidelines). At the theoretical level, diversion aligns with the principles of minimum intervention and restorative justice, which place recovery, perpetrator responsibility, and victim/community participation at the heart of the solution. A meta-analysis of diversion by Schwalbe et al (2012) found an insignificant overall effect on recidivism, while family intervention models and restorative programs showed better prospects.

Therefore, the paradigm is shifting toward determining what type of diversion is appropriate and of high quality. Furthermore, this requires clear normative criteria to determine the limits of diversion's application—especially in cases with victims and serious social impact. Justice in the Child Protection and Rehabilitation System (SPPA) is also inextricably linked to the victim's position and the system's legitimacy. Legitimacy theory emphasizes that public acceptance of legal decisions is influenced by perceptions of procedural justice: respect, the opportunity to be heard, neutrality, and understandable rationale (Nagin & Telep, 2020; Tyler, 2003). In the context of children, the restorative approach is praised for providing space for victims to express their impact, achieve healing, and encourage meaningful accountability. However, critics believe that the restorative process risks pressuring victims to forgive and creating an unequal bargaining position. To prevent restorative justice from becoming a catchphrase, the SPPA requires a design that balances the child's best interests with the victim's right to healing and a sense of security, and establishes normative principles to ensure that healing does not compromise rights or undermine the goal of rehabilitation.

At the practical level, the main problems arise from official discretion and legal consistency. A study by Dani & Niken (2020) shows a tendency for some decisions to remain legalistic—prioritizing the fulfillment of formal elements and procedural sentencing—while aspects of rehabilitation and restorative justice have not yet become the primary rationale in judges' reasoning. On the other hand, Yanto et al (2020) highlighted that the handling of child sexual abuse cases (SPPA) instruments and principles is neglected, thus weakening child protection and increasing the risk of recurrence. Therefore, the dilemma of SPPA justice lies not only in the norm's text but also in how it is argued in decisions. The gap that needs to be filled is the formulation of stricter normative standards regarding when punishment can be chosen and how rehabilitation must be demonstrated as a primary orientation.

At this point, normative juridical research becomes relevant for restructuring the construction of justice in the SPPA by mapping the legal boundaries of punishment and prioritizing rehabilitation through the key principles of diversion, restorative justice, *ultimum remedium*, and proportionality—and testing their coherence with child protection standards and process legitimacy (Dwijayanti, 2017). According to Irma & Lidya (2016) and Widodo (2016), the implementation of diversion and restorative justice often faces institutional obstacles, differing perceptions among officials, and implementation constraints across institutions. Without more operational normative standards, the SPPA is vulnerable to shifting between two extremes: overly punitive or overly permissive. Therefore, the gap lies in formulating argumentative parameters that can guide law enforcement to remain consistent, humane, and just.

Based on this background, the formulation of this research problem is directed at answering: (1) how the construction of justice in the SPPA should be understood and normatively defined when there is a conflict between the objectives of punishment (retributive-deterrent) and rehabilitation/restorative objectives; (2) under what normative conditions can punishment—including imprisonment—be justified against children for the sake of the principle of last resort and the best interests of the

child; and (3) how the principles of diversion, restorative justice, *ultimum remedium*, and proportionality are operationalized as standards for legal consideration. The objectives of this study are (a) to develop normative arguments regarding the limits of punishment and rehabilitation for SPPA, (b) to formulate parameters/standards for legal consideration to maintain consistency of decisions, and (c) to offer recommendations for strengthening SPPA practices that are restorative, proportional, and legitimate in the eyes of the public.

#### **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research is a normative juridical legal study that places legal norms, principles, doctrines, and decisions as the primary objects of study. This approach views law as a prescriptive normative system; thus, the analysis is directed at developing legal arguments regarding the construction of justice in the handling of children in conflict with the law (Haruni, 2022; Hutchinson & Duncan, 2012). The focus of the analysis is not on empirical subjects, but rather on the legal norms governing the handling of children in conflict with the law and the actors subject to these norms, such as investigators, public prosecutors, judges, community guidance officers (BAPAS), and correctional institutions. Within this framework, Law No. 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System serves as the primary reference for examining the protection of children's rights, particularly the principle of the best interests of the child as a consideration in public authorities' actions.

The research uses two main approaches. First, a legislative approach is used to examine the design of the SPPA norm—including the limits on the use of imprisonment, alternative sanctions/measures, diversion, restorative justice, and the principle of *ultimum remedium* and assess the norm's vertical and horizontal consistency. Second, a conceptual approach is used to analyze justice in the SPPA by integrating debates over punishment theory (retributive-deterrent) and rehabilitative-restorative theory. These two approaches are used in normative legal research to identify operational doctrines, principles, and concepts as the basis for legal arguments. The legal materials are classified into: (1) primary legal materials, namely laws and regulations related to the SPPA (the SPPA Law and relevant regulations); (2) secondary legal materials, in the form of nationally accredited and/or internationally indexed journal articles, juvenile criminal law textbooks, and doctrines on punishment, rehabilitation, diversion, proportionality, and restorative justice; and (3) tertiary legal materials, such as legal dictionaries. Data collection techniques are carried out through literature studies and systematic searches of legal documents, as is the tradition of normative research based on secondary data.

The research and analysis focused on the development of norms and discourse regarding the Child Protection Act (SPPA) since its enactment in 2012. Establishing this range is crucial because the dilemma of rehabilitation and sentencing has evolved alongside changes in law enforcement practices and the strengthening of the child protection paradigm. Therefore, the reading of norms must be systematically contextualized without shifting the research design to an empirical one. The analysis was conducted through three stages: (1) identifying legal issues to define the normative tensions between punishment and rehabilitation in the SPPA; (2) legal interpretation (grammatical, systematic, and teleological) to assess the purpose of the norms and the limits of official discretion; and (3) prescriptive argumentation to formulate standards of fair consideration by examining the coherence between SPPA regulations, the principle of proportionality, and the

principle of the best interests of the child. The validity of the findings was maintained through coherence testing (consistency between norms and concepts) and triangulation of normative sources (rules–doctrines–rules–human rights standards), in line with the discourse on legal research methodology that emphasizes both challenges and opportunities in maintaining doctrinal research rigor.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An evaluative review of the SPPA framework reveals that the conflict between punishment and rehabilitation cannot be addressed through a dichotomous decision. The research findings regarding the construction of justice under the SPPA are complex. They recognize the necessity for a legal response to adolescent criminal offenses. Conversely, they prioritize safeguarding child development, limiting incarceration, and a restorative approach as the principal criteria guiding that response. The research findings indicate that punishment and rehabilitation are not mutually exclusive; instead, they should be employed in distinct sequences, under varying conditions and limitations.

This research produces six normative conclusions: justice within the SPPA is more accurately characterized as conditional corrective-protective justice rather than solely retributive justice; the punishment of children is legally permissible, yet its legitimacy hinges on a stringent evaluation based on the principle of last resort and the child's best interests; rehabilitation is a viable policy option, but it must first be regarded as a legal orientation and its feasibility established; diversion and restorative justice function as filtering mechanisms to avert the disproportionate application of formal processes; the critical point of injustice resides in the arguments and considerations of law enforcement, rather than merely in the phrasing of the norm. Additional operational normative considerations are required to avoid oscillation between severe punishment and permissiveness, which compromises victim protection. Refer to Table 1.

**Table 1. Normative Framework for Justice Construction in the Juvenile Criminal Justice System**

<b>Analysis</b>	<b>Results</b>	<b>Implication</b>
Meaning of justice	Not identical to retribution; constructed as correction, protection, and recovery while still taking the victim into account	Juvenile criminal justice requires balance rather than the dominance of a single theory
Status of punishment	Normatively legitimate, but not the primary response	Must be subject to tests of necessity and proportionality
Status of rehabilitation	Functions as the primary orientation of the juvenile criminal justice system	Becomes the principal basis for legal consideration
Position of diversion/restorative justice	An operational instrument to reduce the stigmatizing effects of formal proceedings	Filters cases so that legal responses are more aligned with the objectives of child protection
Practical point of vulnerability	Lack of consistency in the reasoning of law enforcement officers and judicial decisions	Requires more structured standards of legal reasoning

Need for reform	Operational normative parameters	Strengthens consistency and legitimacy in the juvenile criminal justice system
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The first-reveals SPPA principles are more uniformly understood within a justice framework that regards children as both accountable legal entities and individuals requiring protection. An analytical examination of the SPPA's aims indicates that justice beyond guilt determination encompasses the restoration of the child's social capabilities and the prevention of future occurrences. In this context, the implementation of penalties is still feasible, but their purpose shifts: from a simple act of state retribution to a corrective mechanism aligned with safeguarding the child's development. This is significant as it verifies that the application of retributive reasoning in kid instances is not inherently forbidden but is rigorously constrained by the framework of the SPPA's aims.

The second-pertains to the legitimacy of criminal punishment. The research concluded that the criminalization of minors is justifiable solely if law enforcement can provide particular normative justifications, rather than relying on the general deterrent effect. The analysis determined that the reason for criminal punishment must satisfy at least three criteria: the necessity of safeguarding a legitimate legal interest, the insufficiency of alternatives in the case context, and a proportional link between the severity of the offense and the nature of the response. In the absence of these three tiers of testing, criminal punishment often devolves into a legalistic process that fails to comply with child protection standards fully.

The third-validates rehabilitation as the principal normative viewpoint. The research indicates that rehabilitation under the Child Protection and Juvenile Justice System (SPPA) is not merely a lenient policy or an avenue for empathy, but rather a fundamental component of legal reasoning designed to protect children's futures, reduce stigma, and facilitate social reintegration. Thus, in selecting a formal pathway, the responsibility lies not in demonstrating the elements of the offense but in articulating why a rehabilitative approach cannot be maximized or why a specific type of restitution is insufficient for the case's circumstances. The research indicates a need to counter the tendency to argue that rehabilitation is not always warranted and to regard deviations from the rehabilitative approach as requiring a more robust justification.

The fourth-emphasizes the roles of diversion and restorative justice. An analysis of the principles and tenets of diversion and restorative justice within the SPPA functions as a safeguard against the rapid regression of the system into formal punitive logic. The research indicates that the principal purpose of diversion encompasses not only procedural efficiency but also the preservation of proportional reactions, the facilitation of victim healing, and the mitigation of the criminogenic effects of the court process on minors. Nonetheless, the study also revealed that diversion does not address the justice challenge. In the absence of process quality requirements, diversion constitutes a fundamentally deficient administrative procedure. Consequently, the study's findings identify diversion as a significant tool; however, its normative efficacy depends on the quality of the reasoning and the design of its implementation.

**Table 2. Normative Criteria in the Juvenile Criminal Justice System**

<b>Assessment Criteria</b>	<b>Rehabilitation Should Be Prioritized</b>	<b>Punishment May Be Considered</b>
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Child protection orientation	The child’s developmental recovery can still be achieved through non-custodial intervention	Non-custodial intervention is inadequate in the specific context
Last resort principle	Less severe alternatives remain available and feasible	Alternative measures have been considered and found insufficient
Proportionality	The adverse effects of a formal response outweigh its potential benefits	A formal response is necessary and proportionate to the intended objective
Victim’s interests	Victim recovery can still be accommodated through restorative measures	Victim protection and recovery require a firmer response
Risk of recidivism	The risk can be managed through guidance, supervision, or social support	Stricter control is required with clear justification
Procedural legitimacy	Consensus and meaningful participation can still be achieved	Consensus cannot be reached or is not normatively feasible

The fifth finding indicates that the central problem in the practice of the Juvenile Criminal Justice System lies in the absence of uniform standards of reasoning. The study finds that key normative principles—such as the best interests of the child, diversion, restorative justice, ultimum remedium, and proportionality—have already provided general direction. However, these principles have not yet been sufficiently operationalized into a consistent set of legal questions. As a consequence, two cases with relatively similar characteristics may generate different responses, not because of materially different facts, but because of differences in how decision-makers weigh the objectives of punishment, the position of the victim, and the importance of rehabilitation. This finding confirms that reform within the juvenile justice system requires a strengthening of legal reasoning rather than the mere repetition of normative slogans.

Based on this finding, the study formulates an operational normative standard of reasoning that may be used as an evaluative framework. This standard is designed as a set of sequential analytical steps so that law enforcement officials do not immediately move to punitive options. The first step is to identify the objective of the legal response explicitly. The second step is to assess the availability of alternatives, including diversion and non-custodial rehabilitative measures. The third step is a proportionality test, namely to determine whether a more intrusive response is truly necessary. The fourth step is a test of procedural legitimacy, which includes reasons that can be understood, respect for the rights of the child, and protection of the rights of the victim. The fifth step is the determination of the final response, accompanied by a written justification demonstrating the relationship between the facts of the case, the objectives of the law, and the choice of sanction.

**Table 3. Operational Legal Reasoning Framework in the Juvenile Criminal Justices**

Stage of Legal	Key Question	Expected Output
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<b>Reasoning</b>		
Identification of objectives	What objective is to be achieved: child protection, rehabilitation, victim recovery, prevention, or a combination thereof?	The objective of the legal response is explicitly formulated
Assessment of alternatives	Are diversion, restorative justice, or rehabilitative measures available and feasible?	A map of non-custodial options and the reasons for their feasibility
Proportionality test	Is the chosen response necessary and proportionate?	A justification of necessity and balance
Rights and legitimacy test	Are the rights of the child and the victim protected, and is the process understandable to all parties?	Procedural and substantive reasons that are accountable
Determination of response	Why is this response selected instead of other available alternatives?	A structured and reviewable legal justification

The sixth finding concerns the emergence of a model for interpreting the relationship between punishment and rehabilitation, namely a rehabilitation-first model with justified exceptions. This model does not eliminate punishment; rather, it reorients the starting point of legal reasoning. Rehabilitation is treated as the normative baseline, whereas punishment must be supported by proof of necessity, sufficiency of reasons, and consistency with the principle of child protection. This finding is significant because it provides a more prescriptive framework for the Juvenile Criminal Justice System: legal actors retain room to respond to serious cases, but that discretion is no longer allowed to depend merely on intuition or social pressure.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that justice within the Juvenile Criminal Justice System should be understood as a normative construct that requires a measurable balance among child protection, victim recovery, public interest, and the legitimacy of the legal system. The findings clarify that the quality of the system is not determined solely by the availability of legal instruments, but also by its capacity to translate those principles into reasoning that is consistent, explainable, and reviewable. These findings also provide the basis for the discussion section, particularly for examining the extent to which the proposed construction aligns with, or departs from, the theories of punishment, restorative justice and legal legitimacy employed in this study.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings suggest that justice in the Juvenile Criminal Justice System cannot be reduced to a binary choice between punishment and recovery. Although that dichotomy is useful at a conceptual level, it is insufficient for explaining how juvenile cases should be assessed in normative terms. The present study shows that justice in the SPPA must operate simultaneously through acknowledgment of wrongdoing, protection of the child's development, and restoration of disrupted social relations. This position supports critiques of both retributive reductionism and restorative romanticism, namely that no single model is adequate for all juvenile cases (Menkel-Meadow, 2007; Wenzel & Okimoto, 2016).

Within this framework, punishment remains legally available, but its legitimacy must be subjected to a stricter justificatory threshold than in adult cases. This is because modern retributive theory does not simply endorse harsh punishment;

rather, it requires proportionality, moral justification, and a meaningful relationship between the response and the offender's culpability (Carlsmith & Darley, 2008). In juvenile cases, however, culpability cannot be assessed without considering developmental immaturity, limited self-control, and vulnerability to environmental influence. In that respect, the study's finding that punishment should be treated as an option subject to necessity and proportionality tests constitutes an important correction to approaches that rely too heavily on desert as a sufficient basis for response.

The study also reinforces the argument that a rehabilitative orientation is not merely a softer policy preference, but a more rational legal response in many juvenile cases. Developmental scholarship has shown that adolescents remain unstable in decision-making and impulse regulation, which requires differentiation in both the assessment of culpability and the objectives of legal intervention (Steinberg, 2009). Likewise, punitive policies toward juveniles may generate long-term outcomes that are criminogenic rather than preventive (Skeem et al., 2014). For that reason, rehabilitation should be understood as a normatively grounded and empirically defensible baseline, rather than a discretionary or secondary option.

At the same time, the findings do not support an idealized reading of rehabilitation that neglects victims and public interests. Restorative justice can only be regarded as fair when it is voluntary, balanced, and capable of accommodating the rights and recovery of affected parties (Maswandi et al., 2023; Menkel-Meadow, 2007). This is why the study places restorative justice and diversion in a filtering role rather than treating them as automatic responses. Their normative value depends on procedural quality, not merely on formal availability. Without that safeguard, diversion risks becoming a symbolic mechanism that appears progressive while failing to satisfy substantive justice.

A major contribution of this study lies in its insistence that the weakness of the SPPA is not simply the absence of legal norms, but the absence of an operational standard of reasoning. Many debates in juvenile criminal law stop at the level of principles without translating those principles into a structured argumentative framework. The present study addresses that gap by shifting attention from what the principles are to how they should be tested in concrete legal reasoning. This move is consistent with normative legal scholarship, which emphasizes that the quality of legal decisions depends not only on the existence of norms, but on the coherence of reasoning through which norms are connected to the facts of the case (Hutchinson, 2015; Hutchinson & Duncan, 2012).

This argument is particularly relevant in the Indonesian context, where the central difficulty often lies in the inconsistent interaction between legal norms, institutional culture, and implementation capacity. Prior studies have shown that children in conflict with the law in Indonesia are still processed within a field marked by uneven institutional responses and competing logics of intervention (Davies & Robson, 2016). The present findings support that view by showing that disparities do not necessarily arise from materially different cases, but from different ways of weighing punishment, rehabilitation, victim interests, and legal purpose. Justice in the SPPA, therefore, should be understood not merely through the final outcome imposed, but through the consistency and reviewability of the reasoning that produces that outcome.

The findings further show that procedural legitimacy is indispensable to a defensible rehabilitative framework. Research on procedural justice has repeatedly demonstrated that legal decisions are more likely to be accepted when

affected parties are heard and when authorities provide reasons that are intelligible and accountable (Nagin & Telep, 2020; Tyler, 2003). In this sense, an accountable rehabilitative response does not weaken the legitimacy of the system; it may strengthen it, provided that the process remains transparent and that the response carries concrete consequences for the child offender in a manner proportionate to the child's capacities and circumstances.

Finally, the study supports a more cautious approach to formal juvenile processing. Evidence from diversion research indicates that diversionary responses may produce better outcomes than formal adjudication when they are carefully designed and implemented in context (Schwalbe et al., 2012). This insight is reinforced by more recent findings that contact with the juvenile justice system may be associated with adverse consequences later in life, including adult criminal involvement (Copeland et al., 2023). However, this does not mean that all formal responses should be rejected. Rather, it confirms the need for a structured framework that can distinguish between cases in which rehabilitation should be prioritized and cases in which a firmer response may still be justified. On that basis, the present study argues for a rehabilitation-first model with justified exceptions, grounded in legal purpose, procedural legitimacy, and disciplined normative reasoning.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that the justice dilemma within the Juvenile Criminal Justice System cannot be resolved through a rigid choice between punishment and rehabilitation. Justice in juvenile cases must instead be constructed through legal reasoning capable of placing child protection, victims' interests, and legal certainty within a balanced framework of assessment. Using a normative juridical approach, the study shows that the principal problem lies not merely in the availability of legal norms within the SPPA, but in the absence of a sufficiently uniform standard of reasoning for determining the most appropriate response to children in conflict with the law. The findings indicate that punishment remains legally possible within the SPPA, but its use must be strictly limited and justified through measurable reasoning. Rehabilitation, by contrast, should not be understood merely as a matter of policy preference or compassion, but as a legal orientation with a strong normative foundation in child protection and in the prevention of the long-term harms associated with stigmatizing judicial processes. In this context, diversion and restorative justice acquire particular significance as mechanisms of normative filtering, ensuring that the system does not resort too quickly to more intrusive formal responses.

The principal contribution of this study lies in the formulation of a more operational normative framework for assessing the relationship between punishment and rehabilitation in proportional terms. This framework encourages legal actors to move beyond the mere establishment of the elements of the offense and to consider the objective of intervention, the availability of alternatives, the quality of the process, and the legitimacy of the reasons underlying the final decision. Accordingly, strengthening the SPPA in the future requires not only greater consistency in the application of legal rules, but also an improvement in the quality of legal reasoning in practice. Such a direction is essential if juvenile justice is to produce not merely decisions, but forms of justice that protect, restore, and at the same time preserve the authority of the law.

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