

Restorative Justice at the Grassroots: Exploring Cultural Integration and Police Facilitation in Criminal Case Settlements in Waesala, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of Restorative Justice (RJ) implementation in resolving criminal cases in the jurisdiction of Waesala Police, West Seram Regency, Maluku Province. The study used a Mixed Methods Sequential Explanatory Design approach, combining quantitative analysis based on Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and qualitative analysis through in-depth interviews and thematic coding with NVivo 12 Plus. The quantitative stage focuses on dimensions such as Police Socialization (SP), Victim Involvement (KK), Process Effectiveness (EP), and Satisfaction and Sense of Justice (KRK). The results of the CFA test showed high validity and reliability of the measurement model, with the dimensions of Empathy (EP) and Cultural Restorative Justice (KRK) as dominant contributors based on a factor loading value of 0.97. Qualitative findings revealed important themes such as barriers to victim education, the role of the police as a facilitator, perceptions of justice, and case criteria that are eligible for RJ. Data triangulation ensured depth of context and theoretical confirmation. The results of the study prove that RJ not only increases procedural satisfaction and social harmony, but is also in line with local cultural values when facilitated properly. This study provides academic contributions as well as practical recommendations for law enforcement institutions in designing RJ policies that are relevant to local conditions.

I. Introduction

Restorative Justice (RJ) marks a fundamental paradigm shift in the handling of crime and violations of the law. RJ has emerged as an alternative approach to resolving criminal cases that emphasizes the restoration of social relations, reparation of losses, and the active participation of victims, perpetrators, and the community. Unlike the retributive justice paradigm that focuses on the imposition of punishment as a response to violations of the law, RJ emphasizes the principles of voluntariness, perpetrator accountability, inclusiveness, and healing.

This approach has been implemented in a variety of contexts, including the criminal justice system, educational settings, and work organizations through models such as victim-offender mediation, family conferences, community reparative councils, and circle sentencing. Several studies have shown that RJ has the potential to improve the psychological well-being of post-traumatic victims, reduce rates of offender recidivism, and strengthen social cohesion through active community engagement. However, the implementation of RJ has not always been smooth due to structural and cultural challenges, such as gaps in the application of RJ principles in the context of transitional justice, difficulties in integration with conventional justice systems, and the need for local adaptation of RJ practices to fit with local values and norms.

In Indonesia, the implementation of RJ has begun to receive serious attention in the justice system, one of which is through the Regulation of the Chief of Police No. 8 of 2021 which provides guidance for the Police in resolving minor criminal cases peacefully. In the Waesala Police area, West Seram Regency, Maluku Province, RJ has been used as an alternative method in resolving certain criminal cases. This area has unique social and cultural characteristics, where traditional values such as deliberation and mutual cooperation are still strong and are the main basis for resolving conflicts.

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of RJ implementation in resolving criminal cases at Waesala Police, focusing on factors that influence the success of the RJ process and the challenges faced. Using the Mixed Methods Sequential Explanatory Design approach, this study combines quantitative analysis based on Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and qualitative analysis based on in-depth interviews to gain a holistic and contextual understanding of the dynamics of RJ implementation in the field.

The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical contributions in the development of the RJ approach as well as practical recommendations for law enforcement institutions in designing RJ implementation policies and strategies that are more effective and relevant to local conditions. In addition, this study also aims to identify how local cultural values can be strengthened as a foundation in the implementation of RJ, so as to create justice that is felt by victims and perpetrators subjectively while maintaining social harmony in society.

Literature Review

Restorative Justice (RJ) is a paradigm shift in dealing with crimes and violations of the law, with an emphasis on restoring losses and improving social relations, rather than simply punishing the perpetrator. This approach is in stark contrast to traditional retributive justice which places more emphasis on retribution for violations of the law. Restorative justice is based on several core principles, namely voluntariness from all parties involved, accountability of the perpetrator, reparation and healing, and inclusiveness and active participation of victims, perpetrators, and the community in the resolution process.

Restorative justice has been implemented in a variety of contexts, from the criminal justice system to educational settings and workplace organizations. Common models include victim-offender mediation, family group conferencing, community reparative boards, and stakeholder-based sentencing circles (Cao and Van Vu 2024; El-Kady 2024; Goldblum 2023; Shachaf-Friedman and Elisha 2024; Wilson 2016; Wormer 2004). The application of these models demonstrates the great potential of RJ in restoring social relationships and encouraging active community participation.

Some significant benefits of RJ include victim empowerment and improved post-traumatic psychological well-being, reduced recidivism rates among offenders, and strengthened social cohesion through community engagement (Kirkwood 2022; Latha and Thilagaraj 2013; Nascimento et al. 2023; Shachaf-Friedman and Elisha 2024; Williams 2024). However, implementation challenges remain, such as gaps in the application of RJ principles in the context of transitional justice, difficulties in integration with conventional justice systems, and the need for cultural and contextual adaptation to RJ practices.

Overall, restorative justice offers a more holistic approach and focuses on healing rather than punishment. Its success depends largely on the voluntary participation of all parties, the accountability of the perpetrator, and the involvement of the community. Despite its promise of many benefits, structural and cultural barriers still pose challenges in the implementation and integration of restorative justice with the prevailing legal system.

2. Research Method

Research Approaches and Types

This study uses the Mixed Methods Sequential Explanatory Design approach, which is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods sequentially. The first stage is the collection and analysis of quantitative data to test the effectiveness model of the restorative justice method, then continued with the collection of qualitative data to explore the context and meaning behind the quantitative results. This approach was chosen so that researchers can gain a holistic understanding of the application of restorative justice in resolving criminal cases at the Waesala Police.

Location and Time of Research

This research was conducted at Waesala Police, West Seram Regency, Maluku Province. The research was conducted from February to April 2025.

Population and Research Sample

a. Quantitative

Population: All parties (victims, perpetrators, or their families) involved in resolving criminal cases through the restorative justice method in the jurisdiction of the Waesala Police since 2018.

Sample: Selected using purposive sampling technique, with the criteria that respondents have participated in the RJ process and are willing to provide an assessment. The minimum number of samples refers to the SEM indicator ratio (10–20 respondents per indicator) as recommended by Hair (J. F. Hair et al. 2010).

b. Qualitative

Key informants: Police Chief, investigators, community leaders, victims and perpetrators of cases resolved through the RJ method. The selection was done purposively, based on their direct experience in implementing RJ.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

a. Quantitative Data

Instrument: Closed questionnaire based on a Likert scale of 1–5 with indicators such as: understanding of RJ procedures, involvement in the process, satisfaction with the results, and perceptions of fairness and its impact on social relations.

Validation: Content validity testing was carried out by referring to Donald Black's theory (1976) and the principles of restorative justice as stated in national regulations (Chief of Police No. 8 of 2021; Law No. 11 of 2012).

b. Qualitative Data

Instrument: Semi-structured interview guide.

Technique: In-depth interviews and observations of the ongoing mediation process. Data were transcribed for thematic analysis.

Data Analysis Techniques

a. Quantitative Analysis with SEM-LISREL

Quantitative analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the help of LISREL 8.80 software to test the relationship between latent variables (Jöreskog and Sörbom 1996) such as:

- a) Police Socialization (SP)
- b) Victim Involvement (KK)
- c) Process Effectiveness (EP)
- d) Satisfaction and Sense of Justice (KRK)

The analysis steps include:

- a) Convergent validity test with loading factor value ≥ 0.50
- b) Reliability test through Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
- c) Evaluation of the Goodness of Fit (GoF) of the model is based on *Persimonious Fit*

Indices.

b. Qualitative Analysis with NVivo

Qualitative data were analyzed using NVivo 12 Plus software with the following stages (LAKEMAN 2008; M. B., Miles, A. M., Huberman, & J. 2014):

- a) Verbatim transcription of the interview results.
- b) Open coding and axial coding based on themes such as: "perceptions of justice", "barriers to victim education", "role of police", and "social impact".
- c) Visualization of analysis results using node matrix features and mind mapping in NVivo.
- d) Triangulation strengthening is done by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and quantitative data.

Triangulation and Data Validity

This study applied triangulation of methods and sources, by comparing the statistical results of SEM and qualitative findings of NVivo to ensure consistency and depth of analysis. Validity was strengthened through member checking, peer debriefing, and audit trail.

Research Ethics

Researchers ensure compliance with ethical principles of research: maintaining respondent confidentiality, obtaining informed consent (*informed consent*), and does not intervene in the legal process. All data is used for academic purposes only. Results and Discussion

Quantitative Analysis

a) Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test

Before conducting construct validity analysis, instrument reliability, and structural model testing, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were first conducted. This test aims to assess the adequacy of the data and measure the extent to which the variables in the questionnaire are correlated and worthy of being analyzed using a factor approach. The results of the KMO and Bartlett tests indicate that the data meets the requirements to proceed to the factor analysis and structural model stages using the SEM approach (J. F. Hair et al. 2010; Kaiser 1974).

Table 1. KMO Test and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.929
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2632.795
	Df	120
	Say	.000

Before conducting the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), a sample adequacy test and correlation assumptions between variables were first conducted through the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The results of the KMO test showed a value of 0.929 which is included in the very high category. According to Kaiser (1974), a KMO value above 0.90 indicates that the data has a very adequate sample adequacy for further analysis using factor analysis techniques. In addition, the results of the Bartlett's Test showed an Approx. Chi-Square value of 2632.795 with a degree of freedom (df) of 120 and a significance of 0.000. A significance value smaller than 0.05 indicates that there is sufficient correlation between variables in the correlation matrix, so that the data is not identical and is worthy of being analyzed by factor. Thus, these two results indicate that the data meets the requirements to proceed to the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) stage to test the construct validity of the measurement model used (J. F. Hair et al. 2010; Kaiser 1974).

b) Validity Test

To test the construct validity of the research instrument, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) analysis was conducted to see the extent to which the indicators were able to represent the latent construct being measured. In this analysis, the criteria used to assess the validity of the indicator refers to the standardized factor loading (λ) value. Based on the guidelines from Hair and Fornell & Larcker (1981), an indicator is considered to have adequate construct validity if its loading value is ≥ 0.50 , which indicates a substantial contribution to the construct. Indicators with loading values < 0.50 are considered for elimination because they are considered to be less significant in representing the construct. Therefore, only indicators that meet the threshold are used in calculating construct reliability such as Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

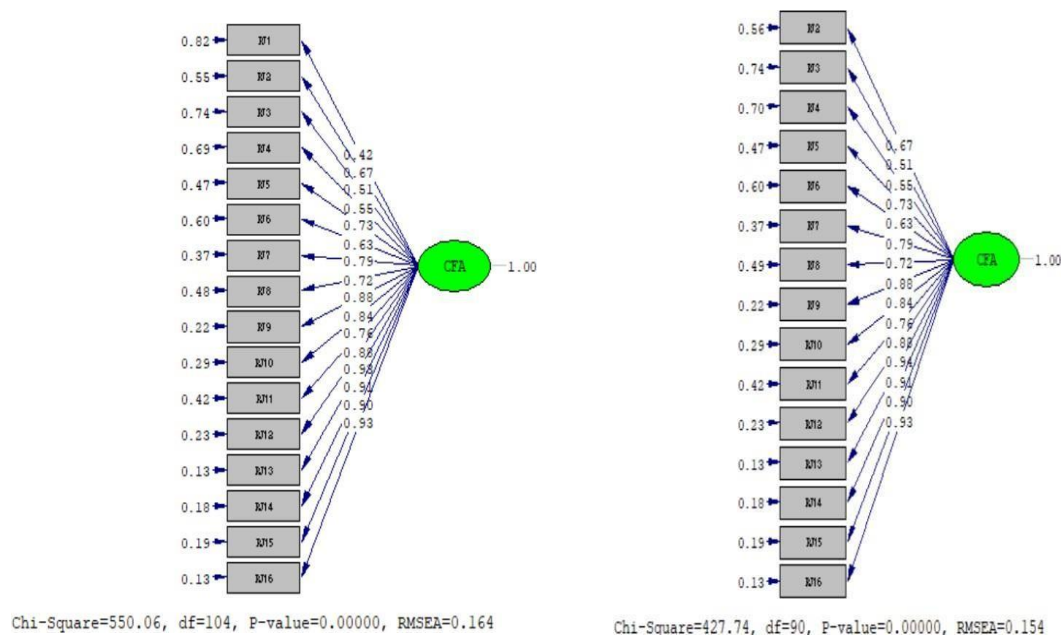


Figure 1a. CFA Restorative Justice Test Figure 1b. Reanalysis of CFA Restorative Justice Test

The figure above shows two stages of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The left figure shows the initial CFA model with 16 indicators measuring one latent construct. In this initial model, an evaluation of the construct validity was carried out using the standard loading factor value, where an indicator is considered valid if it has a loading ≥ 0.50 . Based on the estimation results, there is only one indicator that does not meet the requirements, namely RJ1 with a loading value of 0.42, so this indicator is considered invalid and is a candidate for elimination.

In response to these findings, a model reanalysis was conducted as shown in the figure on the right. In this revised model, the RJ1 indicator was removed, and only indicators with loading ≥ 0.50 were retained. As a result, all remaining indicators showed adequate construct validity. This change also contributed to improving the conceptual structure of the model, although the RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) values in both models were still above the ideal threshold (<0.08), namely 0.164 in the initial model and 0.154 in the reanalysis model, indicating that the model improvement was not yet fully optimal in terms of model fit.

However, in terms of construct validity, the reanalysis model is better because it has eliminated indicators that do not meet the requirements. Thus, this model is considered more appropriate for use in construct measurement, because it only includes indicators that are statistically significant in representing the construct.

c) Reliability Test

After conducting a construct validity test through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), the results obtained show that the RJ1 indicator has a loading value of 0.42, which is below the minimum threshold of 0.50. Therefore, the RJ1 indicator is considered invalid and then removed from the model. Furthermore, a construct reliability test is conducted to assess the internal consistency of the remaining indicators using two main measures, namely Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

The criteria used in this reliability test refer to the provision that the CR value ≥ 0.70 indicates good reliability, while the AVE value ≥ 0.50 indicates that the average variance extracted by the construct is greater than the error variance. With the remaining valid indicators, the reliability test provides a more accurate picture of the stability and consistency of the construct formed in this research model.

The Construct Reliability (CR) value reflects the level of internal consistency between indicators in a construct, which ideally should be at least 0.70 to indicate good reliability (J. Hair et al. 2010). Meanwhile, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) measures the proportion of indicator variance that is successfully explained by the latent construct, with a recommended minimum value of 0.50. An AVE value ≥ 0.50 indicates that the construct is more capable of explaining indicator variance than measurement error.

$$CR = \frac{(\sum \lambda)^2}{(\sum \lambda)^2 + \sum \varepsilon}$$

Where,

δ = error variance of each indicator = $1 - \lambda^2$

$CR \geq 0.70$ indicates adequate construct reliability (J. Hair et al. 2010)

$$AVE = \frac{\sum \lambda^2}{\sum \lambda^2 + \sum \varepsilon}$$

Where:

λ = standardized factor loading of each indicator

ε = error variance = $1 - \min^2$

AVE $\geq$ 0.50 indicates that on average more than 50% of the indicator variance is explained by the construct (Fornell and Larcker 1981).

Composite Reliability Calculation

$$CR = \frac{(10.73)^2}{(10.73)^2 + 4.1743} = \frac{115.1329}{115.1329 + 4.1743} = \frac{115.1329}{119.3072} \approx 0.97$$

Average Variance Extracted Calculation

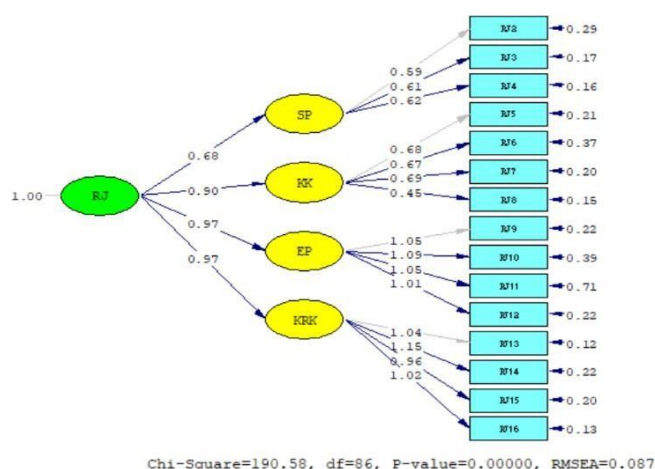
$$AVE = \frac{8.8257}{13} \approx 0.68$$

Based on the results of construct reliability calculations, the Composite Reliability (CR) value was obtained at 0.97, indicating a very high level of internal consistency. This value far exceeds the recommended minimum threshold of 0.70, as stated by Hair et al. (2010), so it can be concluded that the tested construct has very good reliability. In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of 0.68 is also above the minimum limit of 0.50, indicating that convergent validity has been met. This means that the indicators used are able to explain the construct variance substantially compared to its error variance.

d) Structural Model Test

Once the measurement model has been proven valid and reliable, and the structural model has shown adequate initial fit, the next step is to assess the model's suitability in more depth using Parsimonious Fit Indices (PFI). This index

assessing the model not only in terms of statistical fit, but also in terms of model structure efficiency, namely the balance between the number of parameters used and the model's ability to explain the data accurately. Some measures included in the Parsimonious Fit Indices category include the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and the Consistent Akaike Information Criterion (CAIC), both of which are used to compare alternative models; models with smaller AIC and CAIC values are considered superior because they are more parameter efficient. In addition, there is the Expected Cross-Validation Index (ECVI) which assesses the potential ability of the model to be replicated in other samples; the lower the ECVI value, the better the generalization of the model. Furthermore, the Parsimony Goodness-of-Fit Index (PGFI) is used to evaluate the suitability of the model with adjustments for complexity, where a PGFI value $\geq$ 0.50 indicates that the model is not only fit but also efficient. Therefore, the use of PFI is important in making the final decision on the model, because it ensures that the model built is not only statistically accurate, but also simple and practical to apply. This evaluation is in accordance with the guidelines for using PFI.



Gambar 2. Second Order CFA Restorative Justice

The following is the output of the Second Order CFA Restorative Justice

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Expected Cross-Validation Index (ECVI) = 1.63
90 Percent Confidence Interval for ECVI = (1.40 ; 1.90)
ECVI for Saturated Model = 1.51
ECVI for Independence Model = 42.02

Chi-Square for Independence Model with 105 Degrees of Freedom = 6651.54
Independence AIC = 6681.54
Model AIC = 258.58
Saturated AIC = 240.00
Independence CAIC = 6742.67
Model CAIC = 397.13
Saturated CAIC = 729.02

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Figure 3. Lisrel Second Order CFA Restorative Justice Output

Based on the model output results, the evaluation of the model's feasibility was carried out by referring to the Parsimonious Fit Indices (PFI), which include the ECVI, AIC, and CAIC values. The Expected Cross-Validation Index (ECVI) value of the model is 1.63, which is still above the ECVI value for the saturated model (1.51), although it is significantly lower than the independence model (42.02). This indicates that the model's ability to be replicated in other samples is not optimal, because the ideal model has a lower ECVI than the saturated model.

Furthermore, the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) value for the model is 258.58, which is higher than the AIC of the saturated model (240.00) and much lower than the AIC of the independence model (6681.54). However, in a more stringent comparison context, the ideal model is expected to have a lower AIC value than the saturated model, in order to be considered structurally efficient. Since in this case the AIC of the model > AIC of the saturated model, the model is considered to lack parsimony, which means that the model still contains unnecessary complexity.

Similarly, the Consistent AIC (CAIC) value for the model is 397.13, which is also lower than the independence CAIC (6742.67) but higher than the saturated CAIC

(729.02). Although the model is better than the independence model, this result indicates that the model has not achieved optimal structural efficiency according to the CAIC criterion.

Overall, although the model is better than the independence model, because the AIC and ECVI values of the model are higher than the saturated model, this model does not meet the ideal eligibility criteria based on Parsimonious Fit Indices. Therefore, model reanalysis is recommended, either through indicator modification, structural model adjustment, or parameter reduction, in order to obtain a simpler model that is still accurate in explaining the data.

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Expected Cross-Validation Index (ECVI) = 1.22
90 Percent Confidence Interval for ECVI = (1.07 ; 1.43)
ECVI for Saturated Model = 1.51
ECVI for Independence Model = 42.02

Chi-Square for Independence Model with 105 Degrees of Freedom = 6651.54
Independence AIC = 6681.54
Model AIC = 194.30
Saturated AIC = 240.00
Independence CAIC = 6742.67
Model CAIC = 357.31
Saturated CAIC = 729.02
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Gambar 3. Ouput Reanalisis Second Order CFA Restorative Justice

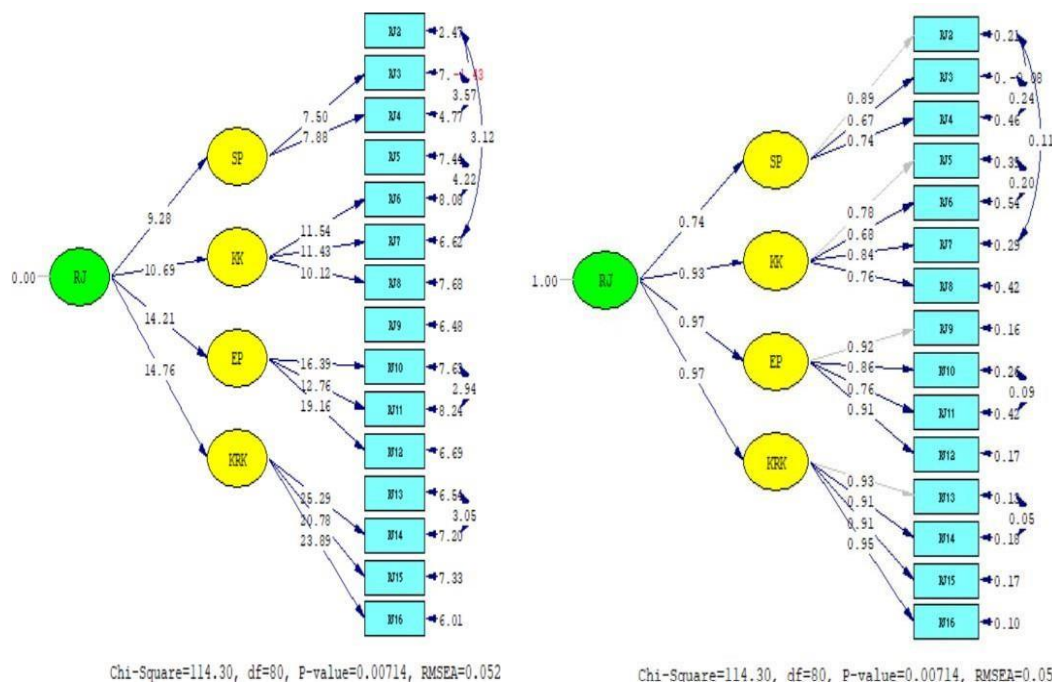
Based on the results of the model evaluation using Parsimonious Fit Indices (PFI), it is known that the adjusted model shows a good level of fit and is structurally efficient. The Expected Cross-Validation Index (ECVI) value is 1.22, lower than the ECVI saturated model (1.51) and the ECVI independence model (42.02). This indicates that the model has better predictive and generalization capabilities when applied to new samples, and is considered stable for cross-sample testing (Schumacker and Lomax 2015).

Furthermore, the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) value of the model is 194.30, which is smaller than the AIC saturated (240.00) and very far below the AIC independence (6681.54). Likewise, the Consistent AIC (CAIC) model is recorded at 357.31, lower than the CAIC saturated (729.02) and CAIC independence (6742.67). These values indicate that the final model has a more parsimonious structure and is not excessive in the use of parameters. Thus, the model is not only statistically fit but also efficient and feasible for use in data-based decision making (J. Hair et al. 2010).

This increase in model suitability was obtained after model reification was carried out based on suggestions from the Modification Indices (MI) generated by LISREL. MI provides information on which parameters, if included, can significantly improve model fit. The researcher then made modifications to the paths between constructs and indicators recommended by MI, as long as the modifications were theoretically and substantially reasonable, according to Kline's guidelines which emphasize that any model changes based on MI must remain based on theory, not just pursuing statistical fit.

By combining the results of validity, reliability, and feasibility evaluation tests

through PFI and the appropriate use of MI, the final model can be said to have fulfilled the principles of a valid, reliable, parsimonious, and theoretically confirmed model.



Gambar 4a. Standarized Solution Restorative Justice Gambar 4a. t-value Restorative Justice

The results of the reanalysis of the model show that all indicators have high and significant factor loading values on their respective latent constructs. There are four main dimensions that form the Restorative Justice (RJ) construct, namely Perpetrator Attitude (SP), Victim Satisfaction (KK), Empathy (EP), and Cultural Restorative Justice (KRK). Among the four dimensions, Empathy (EP) and Cultural Restorative Justice (KRK) are the most dominant dimensions because they have loading values of 0.97 each, indicating that both provide the strongest contribution to the formation of the RJ construct.

In more detail, each dimension has indicators that play a major role in representing latent substances. In the SP dimension, the most dominant indicator is RJ2 with a loading value of 0.89, while in the KK dimension the strongest indicator is RJ6 with a loading value of 0.78. For the EP dimension, the RJ10 indicator has the highest contribution with a loading of 0.92, while the KRK dimension is dominated by RJ13 and RJ16, both of which show a loading value of 0.95. This shows that these indicators have very good validity in representing the conceptual meaning of each dimension.

In terms of statistical significance, all indicators also show a t-value > 1.96, which means significant at the 95% confidence level. The indicator with the highest t-value is RJ16, which is 23.89, making it the most statistically significant indicator in the entire model. This shows that the indicator is not only substantively strong in representing the KRK dimensions, but also statistically very strong in supporting the model structure. This finding strengthens that the results of model modification through reanalysis have

produced a cleaner, more significant, and theoretical construct structure.

Qualitative Analysis

After conducting quantitative analysis using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach assisted by LISREL, it was found that factors such as perpetrator attitudes, victim satisfaction, empathy, and cultural restorative justice have significant contributions to the success of Restorative Justice implementation. However, to deepen the understanding of the meaning and social context of the quantitative findings, this study was continued with qualitative analysis based on in-depth interviews. This qualitative analysis was conducted with the help of NVivo software through open coding and axial coding techniques, which produced main themes such as barriers to victim education, the role of the police as a facilitator, the victim's perception of justice, and the criteria for RJ cases. Thus, this qualitative analysis not only enriches the data, but also functions as verification and contextualization of the previous quantitative results, resulting in a more complete and in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of the Restorative Justice method in the field.

After the verbatim transcription process of in-depth interview data with informants from the police and the community, the next step was to conduct an open coding analysis to identify initial themes that emerged from the data. Open coding was carried out by marking important units of meaning in the narrative, which represent perceptions, experiences, and social realities related to the implementation of Restorative Justice at the Waesala Police. This process was carried out inductively without imposing a particular theoretical framework, so that the meaning contained in each quote could emerge naturally and contextually. The results of this open coding became the basis for compiling more structured thematic categories at the axial coding stage, and supported in-depth interpretations of phenomena that had been analyzed quantitatively previously.



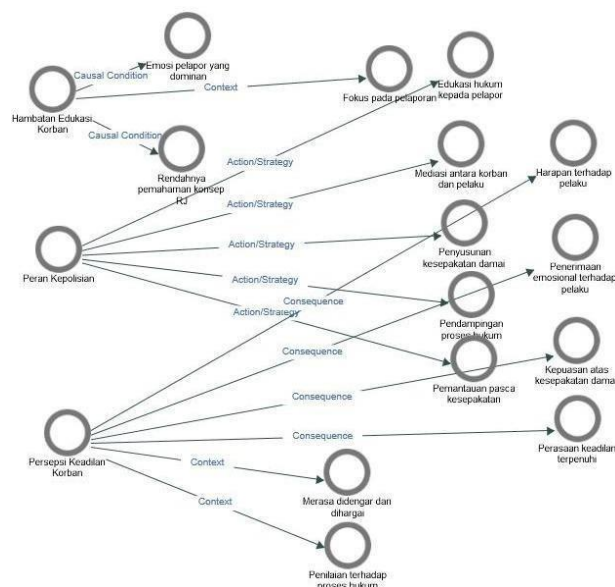
Figure 5. Verbatim transcript interview results

Based on the circular causal mapping image shown, it can be interpreted that there is a complex relationship between barriers to victim education, the role of the police, and the victim's perception of justice as revealed from the interview results. Barriers to victim education are one of the significant root problems, marked by the absence of legal assistance from the start, the victim's low understanding of the concept of restorative justice (KR), and distrust of the peace process. This condition causes the emergence of inconsistencies in the victim's attitude, excessive focus on formal reporting, and the reporter's emotional dominance in dealing with the case he or she experienced.

Meanwhile, the role of the police is an important factor that influences victims' perceptions of justice. The police play a role in providing legal assistance, drafting peace agreements, conducting post-agreement monitoring, building public trust, mediating between victims and perpetrators, and providing legal education to reporters. These roles not only strengthen the legitimacy of the settlement process, but also create positive impacts on victims, such as increased hope for the perpetrator, satisfaction with the peace agreement, and feelings of being valued and heard.

Ultimately, the victim's perception of justice is greatly influenced by how the legal process is carried out and how the victim is treated emotionally. When the victim feels that his or her assessment of the legal process is positive, his or her sense of justice is fulfilled, and he or she is able to accept the perpetrator emotionally, then the perception of justice that is felt becomes more complete. Thus, the results of the interviews show that in order to create a meaningful peaceful resolution, synergy is needed between adequate legal education for victims and the active role of institutions such as the police in implementing a comprehensive restorative approach.

To sharpen the analysis of the dynamics that occur between victims, perpetrators, and the role of law enforcement institutions in the process of resolving cases peacefully, a concept map is used as a visual aid. This concept map serves to clarify the relationship between themes that have been found in the interview results, as well as displaying the mindset of victims and related actors in understanding the legal process and restorative justice. By utilizing a concept map, the analysis becomes more systematic and structured, making it easier to identify key factors, weak points, and potential interventions that can be carried out to strengthen the effectiveness of restorative justice-based resolution.



Gambar 6. Concept Map Restorative Justice

The Concept Map image above presents the relationship between various important elements in the context of restorative justice implementation, emphasizing barriers to victim education, the role of the police, and the victim's perception of justice. In this map, barriers to victim education are identified as causal conditions that contribute to the dominant emotions of the reporter and the low understanding of the concept of restorative justice (KR). These two things are the context that shapes the victim's behavior patterns, especially in choosing to focus on formal reporting rather than peace efforts.

In response to these conditions, the role of the police emerged as the main actor in designing various strategies or actions (action/strategy), such as providing legal education to the reporter, mediating between the victim and the perpetrator, and drafting a peace agreement. Other strategies include legal process assistance and post-agreement monitoring, which aim to create a sense of security and trust for the victim. These actions have positive consequences, namely the formation of the victim's perception of justice.

This perception of justice is reinforced through the psychological context felt by the victim, such as feeling heard and appreciated, as well as a positive assessment of the legal process. Other consequences of active police involvement in a restorative approach include: satisfaction with the peace agreement, a feeling of justice being fulfilled, and emotional acceptance of the perpetrator. Expectations of the perpetrator also increase along with the success of the mediation strategy carried out.

Thus, this concept map illustrates that the success of restorative justice is greatly influenced by how educational barriers are overcome and the extent to which the police play a strategic role. All of these elements directly or indirectly shape the victim's perception of justice and satisfaction with the outcome of the case resolution.

Triangulation and Data Validity

This study applies triangulation of methods and sources to strengthen the validity and depth of analysis of the effectiveness of the Restorative Justice (RJ) approach. Through triangulation of methods, the results of quantitative analysis using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach which show that the dimensions of empathy and cultural restorative justice have the most significant influence on the construction of RJ, compared to the dimensions of perpetrator attitudes and victim satisfaction, are confirmed and deepened through qualitative analysis based on interviews analyzed using NVivo. Qualitative findings reveal the social context surrounding the dynamics of the relationship between victims, perpetrators, and law enforcement institutions, especially regarding barriers to victim education, dominant emotions when reporting, and the importance of the active role of the police in building trust through mediation and legal assistance.

Source triangulation was conducted by involving various key informants, both from the police and the victim community, in order to obtain diverse perspectives and enrich the interpretation of quantitative findings. The qualitative data validation process was conducted through member checking, where researchers confirmed the findings to informants to ensure the appropriateness of meaning; peer debriefing, by discussing

with fellow researchers to obtain criticism and input on the analysis process; and audit trail, which is systematic documentation of the analysis process to ensure transparency and traceability of interpretation. With this triangulation approach, the research results are not only valid and reliable, but also contextual and theoretically confirmed, providing a complete understanding of restorative justice practices in the field.

Discussion

The application of restorative justice (RJ) in resolving criminal cases at the Waesala Police shows a strong integration between structural and cultural approaches in building justice that is subjectively felt by victims. Quantitative findings show that the dimensions of Empathy and Cultural Restorative Justice (CSR) have the most significant contribution to the formation of the RJ construct. This shows that the success of the RJ approach is not only determined by the results of a formal peace agreement, but also by the quality of emotional and social relationships built during the process. This finding is in line with Zehr's research, which emphasizes that the core of restorative justice is the restoration of social relationships and the recognition of the victim's suffering empathetically.

Qualitative analysis support through interviews strengthens the contextual aspect of the findings. Barriers to victim education are one of the crucial issues that disrupt the restorative process, especially in terms of low understanding of the RJ concept and the dominance of emotions when reporting. This has an impact on distrust of the peaceful approach and the tendency to choose the formal retributive path. Research by Latimer, Dowden, and Muise in their meta-analysis also shows that ignorance or misconceptions about RJ are often barriers to effective participation, especially from the victim's side. Therefore, legal education and assistance carried out from the start by the police are key interventions to overcome these obstacles.

The role of the police shown in the concept map as a strategic actor through mediation, education, legal assistance, and post-agreement monitoring shows a paradigm shift from repressive law enforcement to humanistic conflict resolution facilitators. This role is not only important for building institutional legitimacy, but also for forming a stronger perception of justice from the victim's perspective. This is reinforced by Gavrielides' study, which states that the involvement of law enforcement officers in an inclusive and communicative RJ process increases the satisfaction of both parties, as well as strengthening the effectiveness of long-term resolution.

Furthermore, the victim's perception of justice was found to be closely related to psychological dimensions such as feeling valued, heard, and emotionally accepted. When the RJ process is carried out in a participatory and transparent manner, victims tend to give a positive assessment of the legal process, which in turn increases the sense of justice they feel. This is in accordance with Wemmers' findings which reveal that the perception of justice in the context of victims is largely determined by the experience of procedural justice, namely the extent to which the process allows victims to voice their opinions, be treated with respect, and be involved in decision making.

Overall, the results of this study show that the effectiveness of restorative justice depends not only on the legal and regulatory structures, but also on the readiness of institutions and communities to adopt empathetic, dialogical, and contextual values.

Therefore, RJ implementation policies need to be based on a deep understanding of local conditions, and involve intensive training for law enforcement officers so that they are able to play a facilitative role ethically and responsively. This integrative approach not only strengthens the effectiveness of conflict resolution, but also supports the development of more inclusive and sustainable social justice.

Empathy as an Emotional Pillar in Restorative Justice

Empathy is a psychological aspect that plays a central role in the practice of restorative justice (RJ). Within the RJ framework, the process of resolving criminal cases is not solely directed at punishing the perpetrator, but rather at restoring social and emotional relations between the perpetrator, victim, and community. Empathy, in this case, is a prerequisite for the realization of a meaningful recovery process, because it allows for recognition of the victim's suffering and the perpetrator's awareness of the impact of his actions.

Conceptually, empathy means not only the ability to understand the feelings of others, but also includes affective responses that encourage positive actions, such as sincere apologies and efforts to repair the harm caused. In restorative mediation processes, the presence of empathy is often the main difference between a procedural resolution and a truly restorative resolution (Awaluddin, S., 2024). Empathy allows for more open communication, reduces emotional resistance, and encourages the creation of a constructive and safe dialogue space for all parties.

The findings of this study indicate that empathy has a significant contribution to the formation of the construct of restorative justice, both in individual and cultural dimensions. At the individual level, empathy becomes a bridge connecting the emotional experiences of the perpetrator and the victim, thus enabling a deeper understanding of the context and impact of the criminal incident. Meanwhile, at the cultural level, empathy is often manifested in the form of social values that live in society, such as mutual cooperation, mutual respect, and deliberation. These values become a cultural foundation that strengthens the implementation of RJ in a contextual and relevant manner to the lives of local communities. However, it is important to note that empathy does not grow automatically in every restorative process. Appropriate facilitation, a safe communication environment, and special training are needed for law enforcement officers to be able to develop empathetic sensitivity in carrying out their roles. Without the presence of empathy, the RJ process is at risk of mere formalization and failing to achieve the expected transformative goals. Thus, empathy is not only an emotional complement in the implementation of restorative justice, but is also an ethical and psychological foundation that determines the success of the process. Strengthening the empathy dimension, both through institutional intervention and cultural approaches, is a key strategy in building a more humane, just and sustainable conflict resolution system.

Cultural Restorative Justice: Integrating Local Values in Criminal Case Resolution

Cultural Restorative Justice (CSR) is a form of adaptation of restorative justice that considers the context of local values, norms, and socio-cultural institutions in the process of resolving criminal cases. In a society that still upholds traditional customs and

social structures, such as in the regions of Eastern Indonesia, this approach is relevant to creating substantive justice that is felt by society as a whole.

The KRK approach emphasizes the importance of deliberation, respect for traditional figures, and the value of social harmony as the foundation in the conflict resolution process. In this context, justice is not only measured by formal sanctions or material restitution, but also by the restoration of social and cultural relations that have been disrupted by criminal acts. This is in line with Braithwaite's view that effective restorative justice must be able to rebuild social capital and strengthen the network of trust between members of society (Braithwaite 2002).

This study shows that KRK has a significant contribution in shaping the perception of justice for victims. In several cases at the Waesala Police, the involvement of traditional and religious leaders in the mediation process increased victims' trust in peaceful resolution, especially when the process was carried out openly, inclusively, and by considering local values such as "pela", "adat ma nyawa", and the principle of collective responsibility. This is in line with Merry's findings which explain that the integration of state law with local community norms can increase the legitimacy and effectiveness of conflict resolution.

From a customary law perspective, the KRK reflects the principle of legal pluralism, namely the recognition that in a society more than one legal system can apply simultaneously. In practice, the KRK is a form of synergy between the formal legal system and community-based resolution mechanisms that have long been used and recognized by local communities.

However, the challenge in implementing the KRK is the potential for human rights violations or marginalization of certain groups in patriarchal or hierarchical customary systems. Therefore, it is important for law enforcement officers to have adequate socio-cultural understanding and the ability to facilitate the mediation process in a fair, equal, and free from pressure. As stated by Gavrielides, a culturally based restorative approach must always be supervised in terms of universal ethical principles, such as equality, non-discrimination, and voluntary participation.

The KRK also has long-term potential in building sustainable social justice. When communities feel that their values are respected and used as a basis for resolving conflicts, there will be greater trust in the legal system as a whole. This is important in the context of a developing country like Indonesia, where the gap between formal law and social practice is still quite large.

Thus, KRK is not only a contextual approach in resolving criminal cases, but also an important strategy in building a legal system that is responsive, inclusive, and deeply rooted in the social structure of society. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct training, mentoring, and the formation of policies that support the implementation of KRK systematically and measurably.

3. Conclusion

This study confirms the great potential of Restorative Justice (RJ) as an alternative mechanism that is effective and relevant to the local cultural context in resolving criminal cases in the Waesala Police area. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, this study shows that the success of RJ is greatly influenced by

aspects of empathy, inclusiveness, and the integration of traditional values such as deliberation and mutual cooperation. This approach not only creates a sense of subjective justice for victims and perpetrators, but also strengthens social harmony in society. However, in order for RJ to achieve maximum impact, strong institutional support, standard training for law enforcement officers, and public education on RJ rights and procedures are needed. Future recommendations are the need for longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term impact of RJ on recidivism rates and social cohesion in various regions with diverse cultural backgrounds.

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