



Victimology Aspects from the Perspective of Legal Protection of Children As Victims of Criminal Acts of Intercourse

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Abstract: This article examines the application of victimology in the legal protection of children as victims of sexual intercourse crimes in Indonesia. Using a normative juridical method complemented by conceptual and case approaches, it analyses child protection laws, the Juvenile Criminal Justice System Law, the Criminal Code, and selected court decisions, particularly from Papua and Maluku. The study explores how victims are positioned within the criminal justice process, whether as mere objects of evidence or as rights-bearing subjects entitled to protection, recovery, and restitution. The findings show that, although the legal framework formally recognizes preventive and repressive protection, implementation remains fragmented: trauma-informed procedures, child-friendly examinations, psychological support, and restitution orders are often absent or inconsistent. As a result, child victims frequently experience revictimization and unresolved psychological and social harm. Drawing on modern victimology and restorative justice theory, the article argues for a victim-centred juvenile justice paradigm that integrates preventive safeguards, comprehensive rehabilitation, and effective coordination among law-enforcement, child-protection agencies, and support institutions. Strengthening these elements is essential to realizing a truly child-friendly justice system and fulfilling the state's constitutional mandate to protect children from sexual violence.

Keywords: Child Sexual Abuse; Victimology; Restorative Justice; Legal Protection; Juvenile Criminal Justice System

1. Introduction

The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia is a state based on law, placing law as the supreme authority in governing the life of the nation and state (Rais, 2022). It is affirmed in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which is based on Pancasila as the foundation of the state (Rais, 2022). As a state based on law, Indonesia is obligated to ensure that every citizen and institution respects and obeys applicable legal norms without exception, in order to achieve order, justice, and the general welfare of society (Karyudi & Firdausiah, 2024).

Within the national legal framework, child protection is a fundamental part of the developing legal system (Manurung et al., 2025). Law Number 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection, as amended by Law Number 35 of 2014, is an important instrument in providing legal protection for children, especially children who are victims of sexual crimes. For example, Article 64 paragraph (3) emphasizes the importance of providing special protection for child victims, which includes rehabilitation services, legal assistance, and protection of the victim's identity from media publication (Eddyono et al., 2016).

The revised law also includes specific provisions that impose severe penalties on perpetrators of sexual crimes against children. Articles 76D and 76E criminalize forcing or persuading a child to commit indecent deeds, while Article 81 prescribes a minimum prison sentence of five to a maximum of fifteen years for perpetrators of sexual intercourse with a child.

Legally, a child is defined as someone who has not reached the age of 18, including a child who is still in his mother's womb (Marhayani et al., 2024). The state, as stated in

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Received: Nov 14, 2025;

Revised: Nov 20, 2025;

Accepted: Dec 04, 2025;

Published: Dec 30, 2025;



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Article 21 paragraph (2), is obliged to fulfill, protect and respect children's rights. It serves as a normative basis that child protection is a non-negotiable constitutional and moral mandate (Afandy & Desiandri, 2023).

Children, as a national asset, play a strategic role in national development. Therefore, their optimal growth and development must be guaranteed, including protection from the dangers of sexual violence (Rais, 2022). Sexual abuse of children can lead to profound trauma, feelings of inferiority, mental disorders, and even loss of future potential (Siswanto & Miarsa, 2024). Therefore, the state must be actively involved in providing justice for victims and deterring perpetrators through criminal law enforcement (Anwar & Humairoh, 2025).

As a broader form of legal protection, the Criminal Code (KUHP) also regulates sexual intercourse with minors. Article 287 paragraph (1) carries a prison sentence of up to nine years for anyone who has sexual intercourse with a girl under 15 outside of marriage. In practice, many cases of sexual crimes against children remain unresolved, despite the availability of regulations (Hasibuan, 2022).

Therefore, the role of law enforcement officials is vital in ensuring fair and equitable enforcement of the law, particularly for children as a vulnerable group (Saputra, 2025). Criminal law must function not merely as a punishment method, but also as an instrument of protection for victims who experience physical and psychological suffering due to the perpetrator's immoral actions (Sunarso et al., 2022a).

However, the urgency of this research becomes even more pressing when linked to the reality of criminal justice practices, which show a trend of increasing disparity in sentencing decisions in cases of sexual intercourse with children. Court decisions at the first instance, appeals, and cassation levels often demonstrate inconsistencies in the application of sentencing standards, both regarding victimological considerations, the level of victim vulnerability, and the traumatic impact experienced by children. This situation creates legal uncertainty for victims and weakens the function of criminal law as a protective instrument. This irregularity demonstrates a gap between the normative objectives of child protection and current law enforcement practices, making scientific studies related to victimology highly relevant to assessing the extent to which children's best interests are truly accommodated in the criminal justice process.

Furthermore, national and international normative frameworks are not yet fully aligned in guaranteeing the rights of children as victims of sexual intercourse. On the one hand, Indonesia already has comprehensive national legal instruments such as the Child Protection Law, the Criminal Code, and other implementing regulations. However, on the other hand, child protection standards contained in international instruments—particularly the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography require a more holistic, victim-oriented, and best-interests-of-the-child approach to recovery. This inconsistency is evident in the suboptimal mechanisms for trauma-based psychological support, the frequent violation of victim identity protection, and the inadequate fulfillment of children's right to participate in the legal process. This situation emphasizes the need to strengthen the victimological perspective so that the national legal framework can move more in line with international standards in realizing comprehensive protection for child victims.

The phenomenon of inconsistent victim protection in judicial practice and the disharmony between national and international standards demonstrate that child protection still faces structural and substantive challenges. Victimological analysis is crucial for assessing the position, needs, and rights of victims in the law enforcement process. This approach positions children not only as objects of protection but also as subjects with special dignity and vulnerabilities that require more comprehensive legal treatment. This research has academic and practical urgency to encourage child protection reforms that are more responsive, effective, and in line with constitutional mandates and international instruments.

2. Materials and Methods

The research uses a normative juridical approach supported by a conceptual and case approach. The normative juridical approach is used to examine legal norms governing the protection of children as victims of sexual intercourse, both those contained in national legislation and relevant international legal instruments. The conceptual approach is used to analyze theories of victimology and legal protection of victims, while the case approach is applied by examining Court Decisions as representative case studies.

2.1 Data Types and Sources

The type of data used in this research is secondary data, obtained from primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials. Primary legal materials include laws and regulations such as: (a) Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection; (b) Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System; (c) The Criminal Code (KUHP); (d) Court decisions related to the crime of sexual intercourse against minors.

Secondary legal materials include literature, journals, research findings, and the opinions of legal experts, as well as victimology theory. Tertiary legal materials include legal dictionaries, legal encyclopedias, and other supporting sources.

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

Data were collected through library research, reviewing legal documents, scientific literature, and relevant previous research. The data were then analyzed qualitatively and descriptively, interpreting applicable legal norms, comparing them with victimology theory, and assessing their application in juvenile criminal justice practice.

Through this method, the research sought to identify the relationship between theory and practice in the application of legal protection for child victims of sexual intercourse, while also assessing the extent to which the Indonesian legal system has accommodated the principles of victimology in providing justice and redress for victims

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Application of Victimology Aspects in Legal Protection for Children as Victims of Criminal Acts of Underage Sexual Intercourse

The application of victimology theory in the context of sexual intercourse with children plays a strategic role in assessing the extent to which the Indonesian criminal justice system positions victims as legal subjects entitled to protection and redress, not merely objects of evidence (Sunarso et al., 2022b). The theory of victimology, developed by Benjamin Mendelsohn, emphasizes that victims must be positioned as those entitled to justice, protection, and compensation for the suffering they have experienced (Paripurna et al., 2021a).

However, in Indonesia's juvenile justice system, the application of victimology principles is still suboptimal (Paripurna et al., 2021b). For example, in Papua Province, in a case in Keerom Regency, a defendant (Bripda AFH) was found guilty of sexually abusing a minor and was subsequently acquitted by a panel of judges, a matter that subsequently drew attention from the Judicial Commission due to alleged violations of the judicial code of ethics (Media, 2025). In Maluku Province, in a verdict at the Ambon District Court, the defendant for sexual intercourse with a biological child was sentenced to 15 years in prison with a fine of IDR 60 million, but the trial showed that the victim's trauma factors, psychological assistance, and aspects of the victim's rehabilitation were not explained in depth in the verdict (Agency, 2024). In South Sulawesi, a case of child sexual intercourse in Sinjai Regency showed that the victim was still pregnant 5 months after being raped by her biological father, indicating an extra dimension of trauma and vulnerability that has not been addressed systemically in the judicial process (Pramono, 2025).

From the perspective of trauma theory and forensic psychology (e.g., Bessel van der Kolk), the experience of reliving sexual violence in a legal setting without adequate psychological support can exacerbate symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

(PTSD) and even lead to revictimization. When the legal system fails to adopt a trauma-informed approach, the judicial process can become a means of re-experiencing the victim.

According to the legal protection theory put forward by Philipus M. Hadjon, legal protection for citizens essentially consists of two forms: preventive protection and repressive protection (Hadjon, 1987). Preventive protection functions as a mechanism to prevent victims' rights from being violated from the outset of the judicial process (Suryamizon, 2017). In the context of child victims of sexual intercourse, preventive protection includes the provision of legal and institutional instruments that enable victims to feel safe and secure during the legal process (Purba & Batubara, 2022). For example, the provision of child-friendly examination rooms, psychological support from the investigation stage, and guarantees of identity confidentiality, as stipulated in Article 19 of Law No. 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System (SPPA Law). However, the reality on the ground shows that this preventive mechanism has not been fully implemented evenly across Indonesia, particularly in remote areas such as Papua and Maluku, where limited psychologists and specialized facilities for child victims remain major obstacles.

Meanwhile, repressive protection is defined as efforts to restore the victim's rights after the crime has occurred. In the context of victimology, repressive protection not only means imposing a penalty on the perpetrator but also comprehensively restoring the victim's physical, psychological, social, and moral well-being. The right is reflected in Article 71, letter c of Law No. 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection, which requires the state to provide social and psychological rehabilitation for child victims of crime, and Article 76 of the Child Protection Law, which allows judges to determine restitution for victims.

From a victimology perspective, these two forms of legal protection are inseparable. Effective preventive protection will prevent revictimization during the legal process, while repressive protection ensures that victims receive dignified post-crime recovery. Thus, the application of victimology serves as a conceptual bridge between preventive and repressive legal protection. Victimology enriches legal understanding by placing victims at the center of attention in the justice system, not merely as evidence, but as legal subjects with the right to restitution.

For example, in a number of regional cases, such as in Keerom Regency (Papua) and Ambon City (Maluku), it was found that preventive protection aspects, such as child-friendly courtrooms and psychological assistance, were inadequate. As a result, child victims were re-exposed to emotional trauma during the trial process. It reveals the weak implementation of preventive protection. Meanwhile, in the case of repressive protection, verdicts often emphasize only the punishment of the perpetrator without including orders for restitution or psychosocial rehabilitation for the victim. It indicates that the victimological dimension of legal protection has not been fully internalized in the practice of juvenile criminal justice in Indonesia.

Analysis of the practice shows that the implementation of victimology-based legal protection still faces obstacles: (a) Lack of child psychologists in the judicial system and supporting institutions in various regions. (b) Coordination between law enforcement agencies and child protection agencies remains weak in many regions. (c) The absence of standard trauma-informed examinations for child victims, resulting in victims often being re-examined by different agencies and experiencing mental and emotional exhaustion. (d) The normative framework is adequate (e.g., the right to psychological support in Article 18 paragraph (2) of Law No. 11 of 2012; the right to confidentiality in Article 19 of the Child Protection and Child Protection Law and Article 64 paragraph (3) of Law No. 23 of 2002; restitution and rehabilitation in Article 71 letter c of Law No. 35 of 2014 and Article 76 of the Child Protection and Child Protection Law), but its implementation is not yet consistent across regions.

3.2 The Principle of Victimology in Ensuring the Recovery and Protection of Child Victims in the Juvenile Criminal Justice System in Indonesia

An ideal criminal justice system should reflect a balance between repressive and rehabilitative functions (Firdaus & Koswara, 2024). In criminal justice theory, every subsystem of law enforcement, police, prosecutors, courts, and rehabilitation institutions must be integrated to ensure substantive justice for all parties, including victims (Kadri Husin & Budi Rizki Husin, 2022). When the system focuses solely on punishing perpetrators, justice for child victims is neglected.

The Restorative Justice approach (by Howard Zehr) offers an alternative in the form of restoring social relations, acknowledging the victim's suffering, and providing adequate compensation. Zehr shifts the paradigm from the question of "what punishment is appropriate for the perpetrator?" to "who was injured, what are their needs, and who is responsible for fulfilling them?" (Zehr, 2015)

In the context of modern victimology, Restorative Justice broadens the meaning of justice from mere retributive justice to healing justice (Yunus, 2021). This means that the legal system must not stop at punishing the perpetrator, but must also provide space for recovery for the victim, including psychological, social, and material aspects.

In cases of sexual intercourse with children, the principle of Restorative Justice plays a crucial role because: (a) Child victims experience double trauma, both from the sexual crime itself and from the judicial process, which often leads to re-victimization. (b) Formal justice often fails to provide psychological recovery; court decisions generally only punish the perpetrator without including obligations to rehabilitate the victim. (c) The surrounding community often stigmatizes victims, necessitating social reconstruction through mechanisms that affirm the victim's innocence and right to moral support.

Victimologically, Restorative Justice is a mechanism that places the victim at the center (victim-centered). In this approach, the victim is no longer positioned as evidence, but as a party with rights and a voice that deserves to be heard (Zakiah, 2025). This principle is relevant to the Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power (UN Resolution No. 40/34 of 1985), which affirms four primary rights of victims: (a) the right to restitution (compensation by the perpetrator), (b) the right to compensation (reimbursement by the state), (c) the right to rehabilitation, and (d) the right to participate in the legal process.

Indonesia has adopted some of these principles through Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System (UU SPPA), specifically Article 5 paragraphs (1) and (2), which emphasize that the juvenile criminal justice system prioritizes a restorative justice approach. However, in practice, this approach is more often applied to children as perpetrators, rather than victims.

In cases of child victims of sexual intercourse, the application of restorative justice should be directed at: (a) Restore the victim's psychological condition through the support of a psychologist and professional social worker, as mandated by Article 18 paragraph (2) of the Juvenile Justice and Child Protection Law; (b) Guarantee restitution or compensation, either through the courts or the LPSK (Lembaga Perlindungan Anak/Wikipedia), to compensate the victim for their material and non-material losses; (c) Create a space for dialogue and moral recognition, where the perpetrator (or their family) acknowledges their wrongdoing and offers an apology that can ease the victim's psychological burden without negating their legal responsibility; (d) Restore the victim's social standing in society, so that the child is not stigmatized or ostracized again.

Conversely, the example in Papua (the Keerom case) shows that despite sufficient evidence, the defendant was acquitted, resulting in victim restoration and recognition of the victim's losses being less visible in the verdict. It demonstrates that the justice system's orientation is still predominantly perpetrator-oriented (offender-oriented justice) rather than victim-centered (victim-centered justice).

4. Conclusions

The victimology approach to legal protection for child victims of sexual intercourse emphasizes that justice is determined not only by the imposition of punishment on the perpetrator, but also by the state's ability to ensure comprehensive recovery for the victim. Based on Philipus M. Hadjon's theory of legal protection, preventive and repressive aspects have not been optimally implemented, especially in regions such as Papua and Maluku, which still face limited infrastructure for assistance, psychological services, and rehabilitation facilities based on the needs of children. The principle of Restorative Justice, as proposed by Howard Zehr, also emphasizes the importance of placing the victim at the center of the justice process, so that psychological, social, and moral recovery must be a priority at every stage of case handling. The urgency of this research is increasingly apparent in the context of the need to develop a research agenda that focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of a trauma-informed approach in the juvenile criminal justice process. A trauma-informed approach requires clear measuring tools, such as standards for psychological recovery, the speed of institutional response, and the quality of professional assistance during the legal process. The development of this evaluation instrument is crucial to ensure that the protection provided is not merely procedural, but truly reduces the psychological and emotional impact experienced by child victims. The contribution of this research lies in its effort to provide a conceptual basis for reformulating juvenile criminal justice policies that are more oriented toward victim recovery. The integration of victimology, restorative justice, and effective legal protection principles provides a necessary foundation for strengthening policy design in handling child sexual abuse cases. This concept is expected to encourage the development of policies that are more adaptive, responsive, and aligned with the actual needs of child victims, so that the criminal justice system can truly operate with a restorative perspective and support for victims.

5. Recommendations

To strengthen the application of victimology in legal protection for child victims of sexual intercourse, strategic steps are needed that focus on holistic victim recovery. The government and law enforcement officials need to provide effective preventive protection mechanisms, such as child-friendly examination rooms, professional psychological assistance from the investigation stage, and guarantees of victim confidentiality throughout Indonesia, including remote areas such as Papua and Maluku. Repressive protection must also be strengthened through the implementation of restitution, compensation, and rehabilitation rights as stipulated in laws and regulations. Furthermore, strengthening coordination between institutions such as the LPSK (Lembaga Penida Indonesia/LPSK), DP3A (Regional Disaster Mitigation Agency), and judicial institutions is crucial to ensure that the implementation of restorative justice is not misinterpreted as a false peace, but rather as a means of victim recovery and strengthening perpetrator responsibility. On the academic front, further research is needed to develop a trauma-based approach evaluation model that can measure the effectiveness of psychological and social interventions in the juvenile criminal justice process. Empirical analysis is also needed to assess the extent to which the principles of victimology and restorative justice are consistently applied by law enforcement officials. The results of this research can be the basis for formulating policies that are more victim-oriented, while also ensuring that legal protection for child victims of sexual intercourse is in accordance with national and international standards.

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