

The Juvenile Criminal Justice System in Supporting Balikpapan's Efforts to Become a Child-Friendly City

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Received 09 October 2025  Revised 18 December 2025  Accepted 21 December 2025

ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of local government meta-governance in integrating child protection systems within the juvenile criminal justice framework to support Balikpapan's efforts in becoming a Child-Friendly City. Using a qualitative descriptive-analytic method, the research examines the interaction among institutional actors, policy coordination, and restorative justice implementation through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The findings indicate that the effectiveness of the juvenile justice system depends on the strength of institutional synergy and the ability of local governments to act as orchestrators that align various sectors under shared principles of child protection. The study reveals that diversion and restorative justice mechanisms represent a transformative shift from punitive approaches toward rehabilitative and developmental justice, while meta-governance ensures sustainable coordination and accountability. The results emphasize that Balikpapan's progress toward a Child-Friendly City is determined by the capacity of its governance structure to institutionalize restorative values, integrate multi-sector collaboration, and uphold children's rights through inclusive and ethical policy practices.

Keywords : Meta-Governance; Juvenile Justice; Child-Friendly City

INTRODUCTION

The Juvenile Criminal Justice System represents a legal architecture that places children as individuals with special legal status whose rights must be protected in all circumstances, including when they come into conflict with the law. The logic of child justice is not based on punishment, retaliation, or criminal deterrence, but is constructed on a developmental, rehabilitative, and restorative paradigm. Legal systems in modern countries have shifted from retributive models to restorative models because children are not fully formed moral actors with complete rationality and cognitive maturity that can be equated with adults. Cities that attempt to build sustainable and inclusive development frameworks must therefore ensure that their criminal justice policies toward children reflect human rights principles, child development psychology, and social welfare philosophy. Balikpapan is one of Indonesia's significant urban economic nodes, especially in the context of the configuration of national development corridors and proximity to the future new capital region. The city's status and economic scale bring multiple social and structural changes, including new vulnerability formations that affect children's well-being. Child-friendly governance cannot be achieved merely through city branding, public space beautification, symbolic policy statements, or administrative scoring pursuit (Kaplan, 2024). The real test of child-friendly governance lies in how a city protects children when they become most vulnerable, which includes moments when children face criminal legal processes.

The strengthening of the Juvenile Criminal Justice System in Balikpapan becomes a central instrument to support the achievement of the Child-Friendly City agenda (Azhom, 2021). This legal mechanism cannot be separated from the broader urban governance system because justice is not a standalone domain, but is interconnected with education policy, social policy, public health systems, socioeconomic protection, digital literacy infrastructures, and urban community resilience. Balikpapan must be able to build an integrated, interdisciplinary, and systemic protection framework that ensures every child that enters the justice system receives fair treatment, psychological support, legal aid, non-violent handling, and equal protection of rights. The purpose is not simply to reduce crime numbers or recidivism rates, but to ensure that children do not lose their developmental trajectory due to stigma, trauma, exclusion, or social labeling that may occur because of judicial processes. Child-Friendly City policy must engage justice sector strengthening as a foundational pillar since the protection of vulnerable children determines the ethical credibility of local governance.

The SDG 16 agenda reinforces the importance of justice systems in creating inclusive development outcomes (Ebbesson & Hey, 2022; Hope Sr., 2020). Balikpapan's commitment to becoming a Child-Friendly City links directly to global development norms that emphasize peaceful societies, access to justice for all, and strong institutional governance. Legal protection for children in conflict with the law forms a fundamental indicator of whether a city fulfills global sustainability and human rights standards (Collins, 2017; Kempin Reuter, 2019; Oomen & Baumgärtel, 2018). The revitalization of justice processes for children should therefore be perceived as a strategic entry point for improving institutional capability, governance coordination, and local policy innovation (Andrews et al., 2016; Meutia et al., 2025). Balikpapan needs to design institutional governance reforms that strengthen diversion, restorative justice mediation, non-custodial sanctions, multidisciplinary case handling, and social reintegration support. Each of these dimensions is not merely technical procedure but is a reflection of the values of public administration that views children as citizens with dignity whose future must be protected by the state (Livingstone & Third, 2017; McCandless et al., 2022).

Literature Review

Scholarly discussions of juvenile criminal justice throughout the world demonstrate a gradual transition from punitive criminal frameworks toward restorative justice models (April et al., 2023; Wood & Suzuki, 2016). Research reveals that restorative justice creates relational healing, accountability building, and victim-sensitivity which are more compatible with child development needs. Found that restorative mechanisms reduce recidivism and improve reintegration because children are placed in dialogic, reflective, and reparation-centered processes. Children who participate in restorative processes gain recognition of harm without being condemned as inherently criminal (Darmika, 2018; Pan, 2023). Literature also shows that punitive incarceration approaches toward children produce negative psychological effects, increase stigma, obstruct educational access, deepen trauma, and perpetuate long-term social exclusion, which contradicts the aim of child protection embedded in international human rights frameworks. International jurisdictions that adopt restorative juvenile justice show better child development outcomes, improved social cohesion, and stronger democratic participation in long-term (Wood et al., 2022).

Studies on Child-Friendly City governance argue that protection of children in conflict with the law is a central indicator of whether a city truly implements child rights. Riggio (2018) explains that urban development for children must integrate legal protection mechanisms into the architecture of city governance (Mandeli, 2019; Meyer & Auriacombe, 2019). UNICEF frameworks position juvenile justice protection as an element of special protection required to prevent structural reproduction of inequality and vulnerability. Child-Friendly City indicators do not only measure infrastructure quality or educational access but also measure whether a city has systems that prevent children from being victimized by institutional violence, structural neglect, or punitive legal practices. Cities that successfully institutionalize child-friendly justice mechanisms usually have stronger social support ecosystems, wider public participation, higher institutional trust levels, and lower levels of intergenerational marginality reproduction (Johnson et al., 2020).

Indonesian scholarship in juvenile justice reveals multiple structural challenges despite strong normative legal frameworks. Discusses that implementation failures often occur not because regulation is weak but because inter-agency coordination is weak and justice sector implementation lacks restorative perspective mainstreaming (Abdulovna, 2024; Topping et al., 2025). Explains that decentralization provides opportunities for local government to build innovation models of justice governance because local context variation requires localized solutions (Ojha et al., 2016; Zarychta et al., 2024). Cities that develop integrated service units, multi-sector case teams, and inter-institutional diversion systems demonstrate better outcomes in protecting children. The Indonesian context shows that the justice system for children cannot operate solely within court and law enforcement agencies because it must integrate social workers, psychologists, schools, community organizations, and local governments.

Comparative research in Japan demonstrates that specialized child consultation centers play a structural role in diversion and early intervention (Arndt et al., 2018; McCall & Groark, 2015). Research in Sweden shows that municipal social service authority integrates closely with child offense case processing, and restorative mediation is mandatory in many municipalities. Studies in New Zealand emphasize community-based marae justice practices that recognize indigenous value systems and ensure that restorative justice is culturally grounded (Adebobola Omowon & Alaba Samson Kunlere, 2024). Germany implements differentiated juvenile sanctions where custodial punishment is highly limited and is only used as last resort. International research findings demonstrate that systemic juvenile justice reform requires multi-institutional

integration, context-based adaptation, and continuous monitoring. Balikpapan has strong opportunity to adopt comparative insights into its justice development plan as part of its Child-Friendly City policy alignment because the presence of regional autonomy grants the city flexibility to develop innovative restorative justice designs.

Recent literature in public governance emphasizes the relevance of meta-governance in multi-actor justice reform. Explain that meta-governance functions to coordinate independent institutions such as courts, prosecutors, police, social welfare agencies, child protection services, and educational institutions so that they operate under shared values and coherent policy interpretation (Cossar et al., 2016; Warner, 2021). Meta-governance in juvenile justice is necessary because children's legal cases intersect with multiple dimensions of public administration. Local government must therefore intervene not as direct operator of all child justice processes, but as orchestrator that ensures alignment, synchronisation, and integration between stakeholders. Meta-governance provides architecture to distribute accountability and ensure that diversion, restorative justice, and child protection standards are implemented consistently across institutions. Balikpapan has a strategic position to adopt meta-governance approach because of its local leadership capacity, strong regional planning focus, and institutional transformation required in the context of the future capital megaregion.

Literature in human development also supports the argument that investment in child justice protection produces long-term developmental dividends for the city. Mitra (2021) argues that effective juvenile justice systems prevent intergenerational transmission of vulnerability, reduce future crime potential, increase human capital quality, and create better social trust (Whitten et al., 2017; Wildeman, 2020). Juvenile justice is therefore not merely legal arrangement but becomes investment in future city sustainability. Child-Friendly City governance must consider juvenile justice as essential infrastructure because without legal protection, physical infrastructure development becomes meaningless. A city cannot call itself child-friendly when its justice system punishes children more harshly than adults, denies psychological support, or produces trauma that lasts throughout adulthood. A strong juvenile justice system transforms potential offenders into future productive citizens, which directly contributes toward sustainable development, social stability, and economic growth.

Method

The research method used in this study is a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytic approach that focuses on obtaining an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the Juvenile Criminal Justice System in supporting Balikpapan's efforts to become a Child-Friendly City. The qualitative method was chosen because it enables the researcher to explore social constructions, actor perspectives, policy dynamics, and institutional contexts that shape the real practices of juvenile justice governance (CASE et al., 2020; Wenzel et al., 2019). Data were collected through in-depth interviews with institutional actors involved in juvenile justice processes such as law enforcement officers, local government agencies, child assistance organizations, social service institutions, and schools. observation of legal process practices and child protection service governance and document analysis of policies, legislation, implementation reports, and relevant institutional records. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, thematic categorization, meaning interpretation, and conclusion drawing based on the Miles and Huberman analytical model, which produced a holistic understanding of the effectiveness of the juvenile criminal justice system as a policy orchestration instrument toward child-friendly urban governance development in Balikpapan.

Results And Discussion

The core analysis determines how the Juvenile Criminal Justice System contributes to Balikpapan's realization as a Child-Friendly City. The institutional realm is a crucial entry point because juvenile justice cannot operate in isolation. The institutional architecture determines whether the legal framework is implemented effectively and whether protection principles are consistently implemented in practice. Balikpapan, as an urban governance domain, is not simply a place where justice mechanisms take place, but rather a space where institutions interact, negotiate, and shape the treatment of children in conflict with the law. Therefore, the effectiveness of the juvenile justice system is inseparable from the effectiveness of governance synergy (Esteves, 2017; Yu & Zhao, 2022).

Strengthening diversion and restorative justice has emerged as a central instrument for reducing structural disadvantages and preventing deepening the vulnerabilities experienced by children entering the justice process. Diversion is not simply a procedural option under the law, but rather a philosophical shift that positions children as individuals whose futures must be protected, rather than punished. Restorative practices emphasize repairing relationships, acknowledging harm, rebuilding social trust, and ensuring the legal process does not result in long-term trauma (Burns & Sinko, 2023; Lodi et al., 2021). The substance and values of restorative justice in Balikpapan therefore reflect whether the city's justice system respects the core principles of child protection and developmentally appropriate interventions.

The presence of local government meta-governance is crucial when examining how juvenile justice reform is operationalized within the context of the Child-Friendly City agenda. Local governments are not simply implementers of national regulations, but rather strategic orchestrators that align, connect, and integrate various sectoral actors into a coherent policy direction. In Balikpapan, achieving child-friendly city indicators requires the integration of justice policies with social welfare, education, mental health support, and community-based preventive services. The performance of the juvenile criminal justice system cannot be evaluated solely through legal outcomes, but through its contribution to strengthening the child protection ecosystem (Gekoski et al., 2016; Wessells, 2015).

These three areas collectively demonstrate that juvenile justice must transcend legal formalism and be positioned as an integral axis of urban development planning. Progress in child-friendly city governance depends heavily on how justice is upheld for the most vulnerable populations and how institutions prevent the reproduction of inequality through the penal system. The narrative of Balikpapan as a Child-Friendly City is therefore inseparable from the narrative of how the city treats children when they face legal conflicts. The justice system serves as a mirror that shows whether cities are truly investing in future generations or merely producing symbolic compliance with normative indicators.

Institutional Strengthening and Governance Synergy of Juvenile Justice Actors in Balikpapan

Institutional strengthening within the juvenile justice system in Balikpapan is a key determinant of whether the legal mandate within the juvenile criminal justice framework can operate in an integrated and effective manner. Institutional work related to juvenile justice is not only limited by the availability of formal regulations but also shaped by the capacity readiness, interpretive abilities of officers, budget allocation, a culture of inter-agency coordination, and the extent to which cross-actor alignment is internalized as a governance value. The institutional strengthening model in Balikpapan is reflected in the capacity of police investigators, social workers, Bapas officers, public prosecutors, judges, and local government implementing units to translate national child protection norms into routine decision-making at the operational level.

Therefore, institutional reform in juvenile justice is a continuous process to strengthen competence, institutional ethics, policy translation, and institutional responsiveness to child protection needs (Berrick et al., 2016).

The aspect of synergy becomes relevant when each juvenile justice actor does not operationalize protection principles in isolation. The juvenile justice system requires institutional synergy at every stage to ensure children do not experience secondary victimization and unnecessary procedural disadvantages. Juvenile justice system actors in Balikpapan are expected to build collaborative pathways through more dialogical, coordinated, and preventative case handling mechanisms. Institutional synergy also ensures that children are not subjected to punitive bias simply because of fragmented decision-making between institutions. Alignment between the police, the Child Protection Agency, the courts, local governments, and child protection services must be established not only at the formal level of collaboration but also internalized in daily work norms. Governance of the juvenile justice system requires a cooperative infrastructure where children's interests dominate decision-making structures, rather than bureaucratic rigidity (Alméstar et al., 2025; Berrick et al., 2016).

The relevance of this institutional strengthening and synergy aligns with Balikpapan's agenda to become a Child-Friendly City, as governance indicators within the Child-Friendly City framework require not only normative protection regulations but also concrete institutional practices that ensure children receive rehabilitative and protective care. The Child-Friendly City agenda positions juvenile justice as a strategic test of the local government's commitment to developing a child-centered public policy system. The performance of the juvenile justice system thus reflects how strong local government leadership, cross-sector collaboration, and institutional reform capacity can be mobilized to protect children in conflict with the law. The synergy of institutional strengthening in Balikpapan is not only aimed at achieving compliance with national law but also serves as an instrument for creating a justice system aligned with the broader vision of child-centered development and inclusive governance.

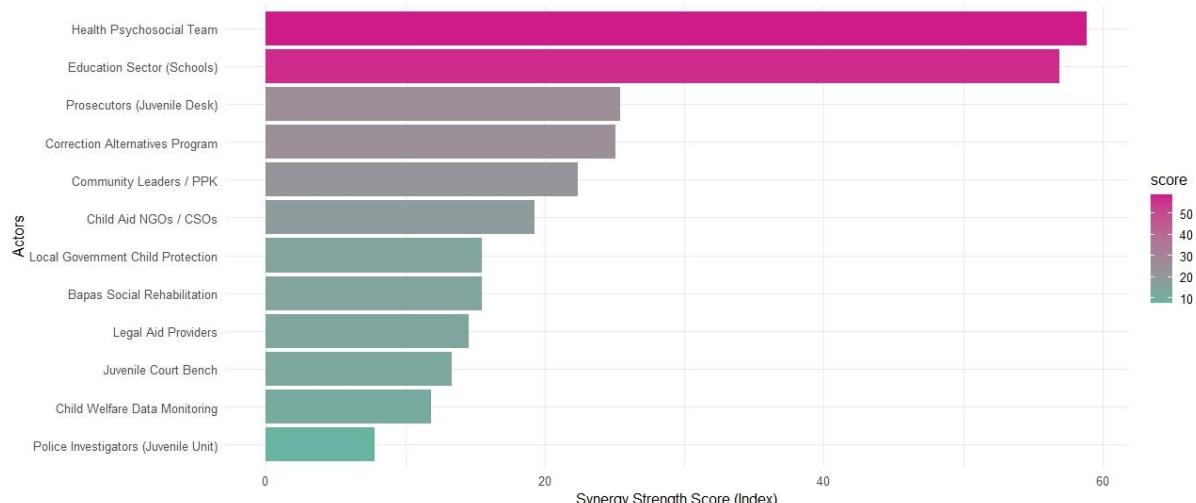


Figure 1 Institutional Strengthening & Governance Synergy Strength Index Balikpapan Juvenile Justice Actors
Source Data Processed by the Author.

Figure 1 is the explanation by the Institutional strengthening and Governance synergy Strength Index Balikpapan Juvenile Justice Actors. Psychosocial Health Team achieved the highest ranking in the institutional strengthening and governance synergy index for the child research institute in Balikpapan. This dominant high score demonstrates that psychosocial aspects are not merely complementary to the juvenile justice system, but rather a key driver in determining the quality of child protection at every stage of case handling. Strengthening the psychosocial approach demonstrates that the success of child protection in Balikpapan is largely determined by the capacity for non-legal interventions and the rehabilitation of children after encountering the law, shifting the focus away from conventional punishment.

The Education Sector (Schools) ranked second, demonstrating that schools play a crucial role in early prevention mechanisms, early screening, social resilience learning, and building social norms against violence and crime. The central role of schools in this orchestration reinforces the need for a robust juvenile justice system that does not simply wait for children to enter the litigation process, but rather strengthens the early gatekeepers in the education sector, who interact with children daily and actively intervene based on risk identification.

The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) emerged as the next dominant actor, demonstrating its strategic role as a screening tool for formal cases in determining whether a case will proceed through restorative or formal litigation. Increasing the capacity of public prosecutors to understand child psychology, as part of restorative justice, and the use of proportional evidence, strengthens institutional oversight systems to prevent secondary victimization and the bias of excessive criminalization of children (Rossner & Taylor, 2024).

The Alternative Correctional Program (APP) enjoys an equally strong position as the public prosecutor and demonstrates that Balikpapan has begun to shift its governance strategy from traditional imprisonment to alternative programs based on strengthening social integration. This alternative-based correctional program demonstrates that child trafficking is no longer solely punitive, but rather opens up space for transformational, preventive, and rehabilitative approaches that are much more consistent with child protection standards and the child-friendly city agenda.

Community Leaders/Community Leaders (PPK) demonstrated a synergy score, confirming that local community actors still play a significant role in maintaining social norms, encouraging community-based resolutions, and de-escalating social conflicts that could potentially push children into further criminal structures. Community leaders serve as a gateway to social control, ensuring that restorative values are not only formally implemented but also embedded in the social context of community life.

The NGO/CSO Bantuan Anak (Children's Aid) also scored moderately, demonstrating the Balikpapan government's approach to not monopolizing the state's justice enforcement process for children. Civil society organizations serve as instruments of democratic oversight for the state, ensuring that the protection process adheres to public morality, transparency, the principles of non-discrimination, and social accountability. Their advocacy and mentoring capacity strengthens the gateway to social correction within formal institutions.

Other actors, such as the Regional Government Child Protection Agency, the Social Rehabilitation Agency (Bapas), Legal Aid Providers, the Juvenile Court, and Child Welfare Data Monitoring, demonstrated stable positions, but this does not guarantee the presence of frontline psychosocial and educational actors. Their relatively low dominance indicates that Balikpapan still needs to strengthen integration programs between formal institutions to improve equal coordinating capacity across all actors (Harsanto & Wahyuningrat, 2024). Formal institutions still tend to be fragmented and have not yet fully achieved the ideal level of structural orchestration.

The presence of Police Investigators (Juvenile Units) at the lowest level indicates that the juvenile justice system in Balikpapan is still undergoing a major transitional paradigm. Traditional, procedural and rigid investigative patterns have not yet fully shifted to psychosocial-based investigations, decriminalization, and a moderate-risk approach. Therefore, in-depth reforms are needed to ensure the juvenile justice system operates optimally and aligns with the child-friendly city agenda.

The Implementation of Diversion and Restorative Justice as Strategic Instruments to Reduce Harm toward Children in Conflict with the Law.

The implementation of diversion in the Juvenile Criminal Justice System is one of the most important strategic mechanisms for mitigating the potential structural disadvantages experienced by children in conflict with the law. Diversion is an approach to resolving juvenile criminal cases outside the formal judicial process, shifting the focus of justice from punishment to protection and rehabilitation. Diversion provides an alternative resolution pathway that avoids formal prosecution. This is crucial because the criminal courtroom environment and formal detention settings have the potential to cause trauma, stigma, and negative social labeling for children. The diversion process creates a protective space where solutions can be designed based on the child's best interests through negotiation, mediation, constructive dialogue, and the involvement of families, victims, and community institutions. This process is crucial for Balikpapan's efforts to become a Child-Friendly City because juvenile justice must be built on the principle of minimal intervention to ensure continued development and psychological well-being are protected throughout the legal process.

The implementation of restorative justice plays an equally important role as a complementary instrument to diversion because it emphasizes moral accountability, relationship repair, and responsibility-based conflict resolution, rather than punitive treatment. Restorative justice supports the philosophy that children who commit crimes do not lose their social identity as members of society. Therefore, they should be provided with structured mechanisms to restore social harmony and repair the consequences of their actions without destroying their future. Victim involvement in restorative justice sessions is also crucial because victims' experiences and emotional perspectives become part of the healing justice process (Nascimento et al., 2023). In practice, restorative justice encourages relational reconciliation, builds empathy, and fosters collective decision-making, enabling active participation by community actors. Thus, the implementation of restorative justice in Balikpapan serves as a foundation for strengthening local institutional capacity to prevent children from experiencing secondary victimization due to punitive legal sanctions.

The combination of diversion and restorative justice creates a strategic synergy in preventing long-term harm by directing justice toward developmental, humanitarian, and rehabilitative pathways appropriate to the child's psychological well-being. Both approaches ensure children remain engaged in their social environment and maintain access to education, family support, social relationships, and future opportunities that can be disrupted by formal criminal proceedings. These instruments not only protect children from immediate harm, but also prevent structural stigma, prevent long-term marginalization, and reduce the likelihood of reoffending. The integration of diversion and restorative justice is therefore a core instrument that aligns the Juvenile Criminal Justice System with the principles of Child-Friendly Cities, where the justice system is not designed to punish children, but rather to ensure their rights, dignity, agency, and development prospects are protected. Strengthening these instruments in Balikpapan represents a transformative legal practice that positions children not as criminal

subjects to be excluded, but as citizens whose future must be protected under a just, humane, and sustainable justice system.

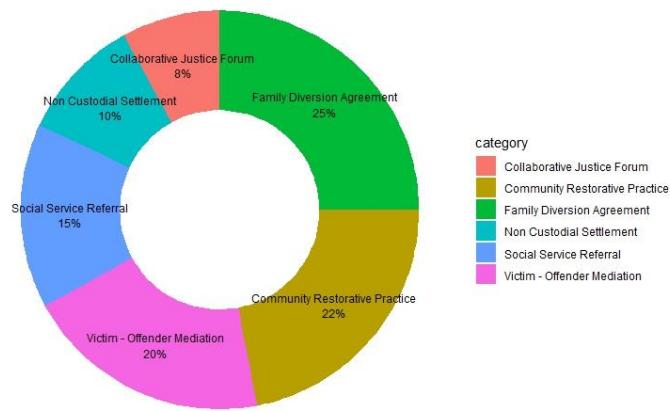


Figure 2 Distribution Indicator Between Actors
Source Data Processes by the Author

Figure 2 shows the distribution of effectiveness in the implementation of Diversion and Restorative Justice as strategic instruments to mitigate the negative impacts on children in conflict with the law in Balikpapan. The proportional values displayed in each segment illustrate the different roles and operational weight of each mechanism in shaping non-punitive and restorative social justice practices. The composition of the values indicates that each intervention contributes unevenly to the practical performance of the city's child-friendly justice ecosystem.

Family Diversion Agreements are positioned as the dominant instrument, with 25 percent, indicating that household-based solutions remain the most widely used mechanism. This approach reflects Balikpapan's policy direction of prioritizing family involvement as the primary medium for emotional healing, behavioral correction, and reintegration at the household level. It also confirms that family solutions are considered more sustainable and less conflict-inducing than punitive measures and institutional detention.

Community Restorative Practices occupy the second-highest share, with 22 percent, indicating that community-based restorative solutions are increasingly embedded as a structural instrument for restoring children's social functioning. This distribution also signals a shift toward informal social supervision, expanded social support, and collaborative regulation as a permanent part of the juvenile justice intervention framework in Balikpapan (Arintyas et al., 2024). Victim-offender mediation reached 20 percent, underscoring the growing importance of dialogic resolution, empathy development, and relationship repair, rather than punishment and criminal labeling.

Social Service Referrals accounted for 15 percent, illustrating the importance of cross-professional therapeutic support as part of a multidimensional rehabilitation process involving social workers, psychologists, counselors, and welfare agencies. Non-Custodial Settlement reached 10 percent, indicating that this non-custodial alternative remains rarely implemented, primarily due to bureaucratic constraints and institutional cognitive inertia among justice actors. Collaborative Justice Forums were the smallest contributor at 8 percent, indicating that structured, formalized cross-agency coordination still requires significant capacity development and scale-up.

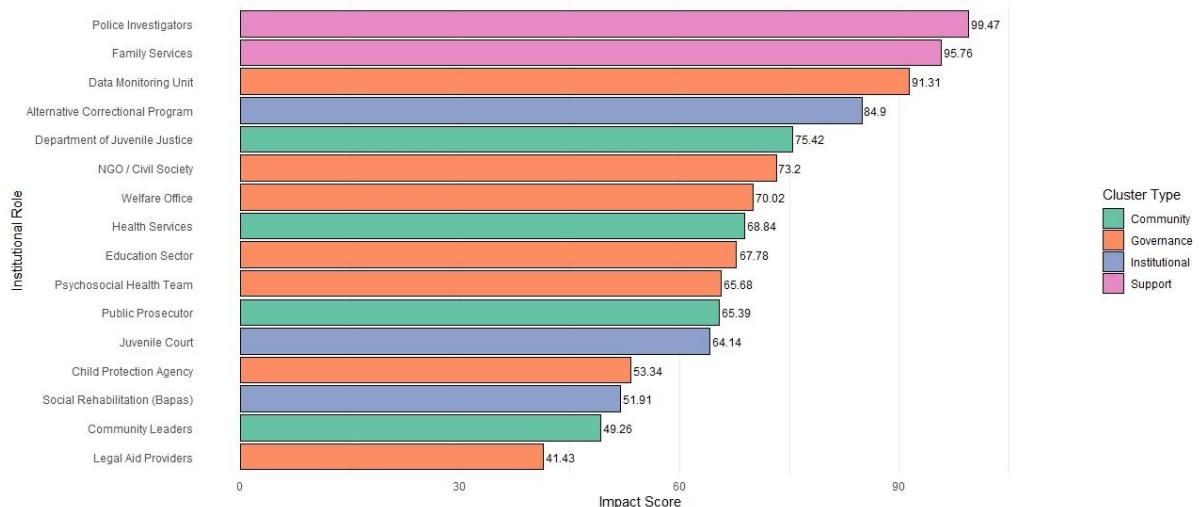
The overall distribution confirms that Family-Based Diversion and Community-Based Restorative Practices are the dominant operational pillars within the harm reduction architecture, as they are considered more expeditious, culturally compatible, socially acceptable, and emotionally reparative for children. This imbalanced composition also indicates that the juvenile justice system is currently in a transitional phase that still requires stronger institutional capacity, actor alignment, and structural synergy. This chart serves as a quick interpretive model demonstrating that Diversion and Restorative Justice are no longer merely optional instruments, but have evolved into strategic pathways towards minimizing criminalization, preventing long-term trauma, and operationalizing a more humane and child-friendly justice system in Balikpapan (Fisk, 2023).

The Role of Local Government Meta-Governance in Integrating Child Protection Systems within the Juvenile Criminal Justice Framework toward Child-Friendly City Achievement.

Local government meta-governance plays a pivotal role in ensuring that child protection systems are effectively integrated within the juvenile criminal justice framework. The complexity of juvenile justice requires coordination among various independent actors such as law enforcement agencies, social services, educational institutions, and community organizations. Meta-governance functions as the orchestration mechanism that aligns these diverse stakeholders under shared principles of child welfare, restorative justice, and inclusive governance. Through meta-governance, local governments establish coherence among institutional mandates, preventing policy fragmentation and ensuring that child protection remains the central focus of justice reform.

The implementation of meta-governance enables local authorities to transform fragmented juvenile justice practices into a unified, child-centered protection network. This process emphasizes harmonization of policies, capacity building across sectors, and the establishment of communication channels that allow continuous collaboration. By managing inter-institutional relationships, local governments can promote restorative approaches, strengthen diversion mechanisms, and enhance psychosocial interventions for children in conflict with the law. Meta-governance thus represents not only a structural reform but also a cultural shift toward participatory, accountable, and humane justice administration (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016).

The achievement of a Child-Friendly City depends heavily on how effectively meta-governance principles are operationalized within the justice system. A well-coordinated framework ensures that no child is left unprotected due to bureaucratic barriers or institutional disconnection. Local governments that embrace meta-governance are able to foster synergy among justice actors, create responsive social policies, and institutionalize restorative values within urban governance. The integration of child protection systems under a meta-governance model ultimately transforms juvenile justice from a punitive apparatus into a developmental instrument that safeguards children's rights and contributes to sustainable and inclusive urban development.



**Figure 3 Integration Impact Toward child-Friendly City
 Source Data Processes by the Author**

Figure 3 presents a comparative analysis of the impact of meta-governance integration on achieving child-friendly cities within the framework of the juvenile criminal justice system. Each horizontal bar represents an institutional role with varying contributions to the effectiveness of the child protection system integration. The height of each bar reflects the impact score, indicating the extent of influence of each institutional actor in strengthening child-centered governance. The color of each bar represents a cluster category based on functional type: governance, community, institutional, and supporting sector. The horizontal structure of the diagram allows for easier comparison of the relative weight of institutional roles within the meta-governance system.

The police rank highest with a significant impact score, indicating that law enforcement plays a vanguard role in determining the direction of juvenile criminal justice implementation. Police performance in this context is measured not only by law enforcement outcomes but also by their ability to internalize the principles of restorative justice and child protection values. A high score indicates a paradigm shift from a retributive approach to a rehabilitative and protective one. The increased capacity of juvenile investigators and their ability to conduct non-custodial interventions reflect the success of meta-governance in coordinating the legal and social dimensions.

The family services sector, ranked just below the police, demonstrates the crucial role of family support in ensuring the sustainability of children's social reintegration. Families play a key role during the post-case recovery phase, ensuring children receive adequate emotional and social support. The high score in this sector demonstrates the effectiveness of local government policies in linking the justice system with family services units. The synergy between formal institutions and family-based support serves as a bridge that strengthens protection from social stigma and prevents the risk of recidivism.

The data monitoring unit ranked third, emphasizing that information management and monitoring systems are fundamental components of meta-governance mechanisms. Data serves as the foundation for policy planning, performance evaluation, and institutional coordination. The existence of an accurate and integrated data system enables institutional actors to make evidence-based decisions. The high score indicates that Balikpapan has begun developing a digital governance architecture that supports real-time monitoring of child cases (Nur Aisyah et al., 2023). This strengthened data system demonstrates the maturity of a transparent and accountable governance structure.

Alternative correctional programs emerged next, demonstrating that non-custodial approaches have become a key pillar of juvenile justice reform. High impact scores reflect the successful implementation of diversion and restorative mechanisms that prioritize rehabilitation over punishment. Meta-governance ensures cross-institutional coordination between prosecutors, courts, and social institutions so that children do not experience long-term harm due to the formal legal process. The implementation of these programs reinforces the principles of humanistic justice and narrows the gap between the legal system and children's developmental needs.

The involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is in the middle, highlighting the significant contribution of civil society in strengthening child protection governance. Civil society organizations act as moral watchdogs of government performance and advocates for children in conflict with the law. The relatively high score in this category reflects the effectiveness of the partnership between the state and civil society. The participation of non-state actors expands the space for public engagement and enhances the social legitimacy of child protection policies. The social welfare and healthcare sectors demonstrate consistent contributions in supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration of children. Their role goes beyond medical or social interventions to include building a holistic protection ecosystem. Both sectors serve as crucial foundations linking the dimensions of well-being with social justice. The balanced impact between the two reflects the importance of an interdisciplinary approach in implementing meta-governance, where mental health and social well-being are key indicators of the success of child-friendly cities.

The education sector plays a crucial role in prevention mechanisms. Schools act as the first social institution capable of detecting early signs of behavioral problems, conflict, or psychosocial instability. Impact scores in this sector indicate that educational institutions are an integral part of the meta-governance framework. The integration of education policy with juvenile justice demonstrates a growing awareness that prevention is more effective than law enforcement. The involvement of schools as strategic partners strengthens the prevention dimension in child protection governance.

Judicial institutions, prosecutors, and legal aid organizations ranked in the middle to lower ranks, indicating that the formal legal sector still requires capacity building and stronger cross-sectoral coordination. These scores do not imply weakness, but rather reflect the transition from a procedural legal paradigm to a more child-sensitive approach. Formal institutions are still dominated by a rules-oriented approach rather than a socially adaptive one. Meta-governance is expected to continue integrating a child protection perspective into formal legal practice to make the justice system more inclusive and equitable.

The lowest-ranking institutions, including several social and child protection agencies, demonstrate ongoing challenges in aligning policies and institutional capacity at the grassroots level. Lower scores in this category indicate the need for greater resource allocation, professional training, and optimization of vertical and horizontal coordination mechanisms (Kapucu & Garayev, 2016; Sting & Loch, 2016). Strengthening these institutions is crucial to ensure that the child protection system functions holistically and avoids fragmentation. Overall, this visualization underscores that success in achieving child-friendly cities is inseparable from the effectiveness of meta-governance in integrating legal, social, and institutional dimensions into an integrated and sustainable system.

The discussion across the three subheadings in the results section reveals a coherent narrative about how the juvenile criminal justice system in Balikpapan operates as an integrated framework within the broader agenda of establishing a Child-Friendly City. The first subheading emphasizes the significance of institutional strengthening and governance synergy among juvenile justice actors. Institutional performance is portrayed not as an isolated administrative function but as an interconnected web of relationships that determine the quality of child protection. The capacity of local institutions to translate national legal norms into operational practices reflects the degree to which justice reform has been internalized as a governance value. The discussion underscores that synergy between police, social workers, courts, and community actors represents the backbone of an effective justice system that prioritizes rehabilitation over punishment.

The analysis proceeds by positioning diversion and restorative justice as the central strategic instruments for preventing harm toward children in conflict with the law. Diversion emerges as a philosophical as well as procedural mechanism that transforms the justice process into a developmental pathway rather than a punitive one. The argument emphasizes that restorative justice embodies the moral and psychological dimensions of healing, accountability, and social reintegration. The results demonstrate that family-based and community-based approaches dominate the system, showing a preference for culturally compatible and emotionally reparative interventions. The findings articulate a conceptual shift where justice is no longer defined by deterrence but by the protection of dignity and the preservation of children's future potential (Noghabi et al., 2019).

The third subheading deepens the argument by situating local government meta-governance as the overarching coordination mechanism that ensures systemic alignment among institutions. The role of local government is framed not as a direct executor of justice but as a policy orchestrator that harmonizes multiple autonomous actors within a coherent framework. The discussion highlights that meta-governance functions as the architecture of coordination, distributing accountability while ensuring the consistency of restorative and child protection principles. This governance approach allows the justice system to transcend bureaucratic fragmentation, building a multidimensional protection ecosystem that integrates social welfare, education, and law enforcement. The results collectively suggest that without meta-governance, the ideals of a child-centered justice system would remain fragmented and unsustainable.

The interconnection among the three analytical dimensions institutional synergy, restorative justice implementation, and meta-governance integration illustrates a layered structure of reform that combines legal, administrative, and social innovation. Institutional synergy provides the operational foundation, restorative justice represents the ethical and procedural transformation, and meta-governance supplies the structural coherence that binds them together. The discussion reveals that these three components are mutually reinforcing, forming a holistic model of child-centered justice governance. The findings imply that Balikpapan's progress toward becoming a Child-Friendly City depends on how well these dimensions continue to evolve into a sustainable and adaptive governance system that protects children's rights while strengthening institutional integrity and public trust..

CONCLUSION

The overall findings conclude that the effectiveness of the Juvenile Criminal Justice System in supporting Balikpapan's achievement of a Child-Friendly City lies in the integration of institutional synergy, restorative justice implementation, and local government meta-governance. Institutional strengthening provides the structural capacity necessary to ensure coordination among justice actors, while the adoption of diversion and restorative justice shifts the orientation of the system toward rehabilitation and social reintegration. Meta-governance emerges as the key mechanism that unifies these elements by ensuring coherence, accountability, and sustainability across institutions. The synthesis of these three dimensions demonstrates that child protection within the justice system is not merely a legal obligation but a reflection of governance ethics that prioritizes human dignity, developmental justice, and inclusive public administration.

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