



Child psychology in special children's development institution (LPKA): A legal perspective on hope and emotional balance

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ABSTRACT

Children exercise of people's sovereignty in a direct democracy is realized through in the environment of coaching institutions are a vulnerable group that requires special attention. Limited access to education, psycho-social services, and an environment that is less supportive of children's growth and development can have a serious impact on long-term development. The objectives of this study are 1) to identify and analyze the psychological impact experienced by children behind the correctional institution, 2) to explore strategies in finding hope and efforts to maintain children's emotional balance in the situation at LPKA. 3) examine the role of law in providing protection and fulfillment of the rights of children in LPKA. This study uses a qualitative legal research approach with a descriptive-analytical type, which is an approach that aims to deeply understand the subjective experience of legal actors in interpreting certain legal events or processes that focus on written legal norms (law in books), and law in practice (law in action). The results of this study are 1) Children in LPKA show high potential for psychological resilience through counseling services, educational programs, religious activities, and communication with families, 2) Strategies in finding hope and maintaining children's emotional balance at LPKA can be done through counseling services, empowering education, religious and arts activities, and family support 3) National legal instruments have guaranteed the protection and fulfillment of children's rights at LPKA with policies that emphasize an educative and rehabilitative coaching approach.

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1. Introduction

Children's development is a crucial phase in the formation of personality, character, and life skills that will be inherent until adulthood. Child psychology as a branch of psychology plays an important role in understanding children's mental, emotional, and social processes from birth to adolescence (Shanie, 2022). In its development, Indonesia has had special rules on child protection, namely Law Number 4 of 1979 concerning Child Welfare, Law Number 3 of 1997

concerning Juvenile Courts, which was subsequently replaced by Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Child Criminal Justice System and Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning amendments to Law Number 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection. Our country already has a good set of rules but is still considered ineffective in resolving cases of children who are facing the law (Wahyudhi, 2015). Based on Article 1 paragraph (2) of Law No. 11 of 2012 concerning the Child Criminal Justice System, what is meant by children in *conflict with the law* is children who are in conflict with the law, children who are victims of criminal acts, and children who are witnesses to criminal acts (Wahyudhi, 2015).

Children in Conflict with the Law (ABH) include children who are in conflict with the law, children who are victims, and children who are witnesses in a criminal act. They are so psychologically, socially, and legally vulnerable, that they require special protection throughout the judicial process. In a normal context, children grow up in a relatively supportive environment full of positive stimulation. This environment is integrated through a collaborative approach between the government, child protection institutions, and the community, and a safe environment can be created (Tampi, 2024). However, not all children have this opportunity, especially those who live in correctional institutions, both as children who are facing the law and as children who accompany parents who are serving sentences. The environment of Special Children's Institutions in general harbors various psychological pressures, ranging from mental health and well-being to minimal access to social contact (Yuda Sinuraya & Subroto, 2021).

This condition makes children behind the coaching institution a vulnerable group that requires special attention and approach. The child psychology approach is important not only to deal with existing problems, but also to detect early potential developmental disorders that suit the needs of children. As emphasized by (Piaget, 1952) that children go through unique stages of cognitive development and must be facilitated according to their age characteristics. Emotional support, an educational approach, and a safe social environment are important elements to ensure that children can continue to grow and develop optimally even in limited conditions. (Santrock, 2011) also emphasizes the importance of the role of the social, family, and institutional environment in providing psychosocial protection for children.

In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Indonesia's Law No. 11 of 2012 on the Juvenile Criminal Justice System, children who come into conflict with the law are entitled to treatment that promotes their mental and emotional well-being. Although the normative framework appears robust, the perceived gap between these legal protections and their implementation in LPKA (Child Development Correctional Institutions) is often underestimated. In reality, many children endure psychological strain due to traumatic legal proceedings. Nonetheless, these impacts can be mitigated through expanded access to psychological services and the establishment of a more child-friendly institutional environment. At the Special Children's Development Institute, children need guidance and education (Gunawan, 2024). LPKA itself is not only a place for criminal execution, but also a coaching and education space. Therefore, it is important to apply the child psychology approach as a basis for developing policies and strategies for handling children at the Special Child Development Institute. This is in line with *the principle of the best interest of the child* in child protection law, which places the welfare of the child as the main consideration in every legal and social action taken. Children are assumed to not have the *legal capacity* to commit acts because the age level of physical, mental, moral and spiritual development is immature (Darwanta, 2020). By understanding the psychological condition of children behind the Special Child Development Institution, various related parties, including the government, correctional institutions, educators, and psychologists, can design more appropriate interventions. Not only for recovery, but also as a preventive effort against the long-term effects of a heavy life experience. Therefore, the integration of child psychology in the correctional system is an important foundation to create a more humane environment and favor the future of children. Life in correctional

institutions presents social challenges, significant psychological distress related to future uncertainty so that it often causes disturbances in the emotional balance of children (Sholichatun, 2011). In many cases, these children experience anxiety, depression, and even post-traumatic stress symptoms. According to (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) children's development is greatly influenced by the interaction between individuals and their environment. When the environment is repressive and lacks support, children will have difficulty developing adequate motivation. It is therefore important to present a comprehensive approach through psychological assistance services and support systems based on children's emotional recovery (Alifah et al., 2015). These interventions should not only restore mental state, but also give children life skills to adapt to society when they return to society. LPKA in this study is the Class I Blitar Special Children's Development Institution (LPKA), which is an LPKA that operates in the East Java Province area, under the auspices of the Directorate General of Corrections of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights of the Republic of Indonesia, and structurally has the main task of coaching, protecting, and empowering children who are undergoing legal proceedings or criminal periods (Eka Fitriani, 2023). As the only LPKA in East Java, LPKA I Blitar has a strategic role in implementing the principles of child-friendly correctional facilities, in accordance with the mandate of Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System. This institution not only functions as a place of detention, but also as a means of personality development, formal and non-formal education, and psychosocial assistance. Based on a report (Kompas, 2023), LPKA I Blitar accommodates 102 children, consisting of 96 inmates and 6 prisoners. Most (81 children) were 14–17 years old, while 21 children were 18 years old. Of the total inmates, 77 children attended formal education at the elementary, junior high, and high school levels, while 19 others did not because they were serving short sentences. LPKA I Blitar not only carries out the criminal function, but also how LPKA plays a role as a coaching and education institution oriented towards the rehabilitation and protection of children's rights. Some important things to look at in it are related to child psychology, especially how to find hope and emotional balance in a legal perspective.

2. Method

This research uses a qualitative legal research approach with a descriptive-analytical type, which is an approach that aims to understand and describe in depth the subjective experiences of legal actors in interpreting certain legal events or processes. Qualitative legal research does not only focus on written legal norms (*law in books*), but rather emphasizes law in practice, as interpreted and carried out by legal subjects in their social context (Soekanto, 2010). Data analysis was carried out thematically, by identifying patterns, categories, and meanings from the results of interviews and observations. This analysis technique follows the procedure of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification (Matthew B. Miles A. Michael Huberman, 2014). This research seeks to examine and analyze legal issues, legal systems, and laws and regulations.

3. Analysis and Results

3.1 Definition of Child Psychology

Children are a valuable asset of the nation, children are a generation that will continue the ideals of the country's struggle and are also human resources in the future, which is an important capital for sustainable development (Lathif, 2014). Child psychology not only focuses on handling existing problems, but also on prevention efforts through an educational and supportive approach. Psychology continues to evolve so that a group of people needs to apply methods of having different views (Sidah, 2021) This includes emotional support, psychosocial interventions, and the creation of a safe and conducive environment for optimal child growth and development. As stated by Piaget, children's cognitive development takes place through a series of organized stages, where each stage has unique characteristics that need to be understood to better support the child's learning and adaptation process (Piaget,

1952). The child psychology approach also includes the application of moral and ethical values relevant to the child's age. In this case, support from families, communities, and related institutions, including correctional institutions, is important in providing protection and guidance that is in line with the psychological needs of children (Santrock, 2011).

The approach to child psychology in the context of correctional institutions is an important foundation for understanding the psychological impact that arises from children's interaction with the environment of the Special Children's Development Institution (LPKA), both as children who are dealing with the law and children who live with the parents of inmates. A number of studies show that children in these situations are at risk of experiencing emotional disorders, chronic stress, anxiety, and social and cognitive developmental disorders (Andrew S. Garner, MD; Jack P. Shonkoff, 2012).

The stressful environment of Special Child Development Institutions, limited access to education and social stimulation, and social stigma can hinder the overall growth and development process of children. Therefore, a child psychology approach is not only needed to identify emerging psychological problems, but also as a basis for designing rehabilitative interventions, counseling services, and educational programs that are inclusive and responsive to the needs of children (Siegel, Larry J.,-; Welsh, 1981).

In addition, this approach is in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child which affirms that every child has the right to special protection, especially in situations that threaten the welfare and development of the child. Thus, the application of child psychology in the correctional system is a strategic step in building a more humane, adaptive, and child-friendly environment for the Special Child Development Institution (LPKA). It should be seen that the psychological condition of children if they are unable or fail to adjust themselves positively, they will easily commit serious crimes or become violators of human rights (Satriya, 2004).

Children in LPKA always represent individuals who have lost their way, but instead show high potential for psychological resilience in the midst of limitations and environmental pressures. This resilience is seen through their ability to stay emotionally afloat, maintain hope, and rebuild a positive self-identity despite being in the correctional system. The factors that strengthen resilience can be seen from the various programs and supports available at LPKA. Counseling services, both individually and in groups, are a safe space for children to express their psychological burdens, as well as learn to recognize and manage emotions more healthily. Educational programs, both formal and vocational skills, provide children with motivation for a better future and strengthen confidence and self-esteem. Psychological resilience is built on the basis of spiritual values and the attitude of submission to God's will (Tajuddin & Amaluddin, 2025).

Religious activities also contribute to instilling moral values, providing spiritual meaning, and creating inner peace that strengthens children's emotional resilience. In addition, continuous communication with the family becomes one of the most important protective factors, since emotional support from parents and relatives strengthens social bonds and helps the child maintain self-identity. The effectiveness of the program at LPKA is measured through monitoring, namely periodic evaluation, individual development records and reflection on the activities carried out. With this approach, children in LPKA are not only serving a criminal term, but are also rebuilding their identity, developing potential, and strengthening their psychological capacity.

a. The Condition of Children Behind Special Children's Guidance Institutions

Children who are faced with the law while in a Special Children's Development Institution is often a traumatic experience. The condition of children is not only lost in freedom, but they also often face social stigma. The environment of Special Children's Guidance Institutions can sometimes trigger feelings of inferiority, anxiety, and even depression in these children. In addition, interaction with fellow residents who have varied backgrounds can also affect

children's moral and behavioral development. A study shows that children who experience detention have the potential to develop emotional disorders and tend to have a high risk of returning to lawlessness in the future. Meanwhile, children living with the parents of inmates in the Children's Special Development Institution face different challenges. Education is not only the state's obligation to fulfill the rights of children but also as part of the rehabilitation process that aims to reshape character (Buana et al., 2025). On the other hand, their social interaction with the outside world is very limited, which can hinder cognitive development and social skills.

The existence of children in Special Children's Development Institutions also raises ethical and legal dilemmas. The Law number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System in Indonesia emphasizes the importance of a restorative justice approach in handling children's cases. However, implementation in the field is often far from ideal. Children's rights to protection, education, and welfare are still often neglected. This condition requires serious attention from various parties, including the government, correctional institutions, and the wider community. A general approach that integrates legal, psychological, and social aspects needs to be implemented to ensure that children can continue to grow and develop optimally. In the last five years, the number of children living in the Class I Blitar Special Children's Development Institution (LPKA) has shown a fluctuating trend with a significant increase in recent years. As shown in the following image.

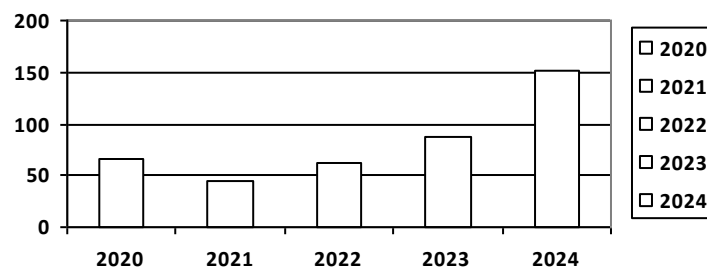


Figure 1. Diagram of the Number of ABH in the last 5 years at LPKA I Blitar

As shown in the diagram above, in 2020, there were 66 children who were residents of LPKA. This figure decreased in 2021 to 45 children, which may have been due to social restriction policies due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the strengthening of a diversion approach in the juvenile justice system. However, in 2022 there was an increase to 63 children, and this trend continues with a significant increase in 2023 as many as 88 children. The peak will occur in 2024, where the number of residents reaches 152 children, the highest figure in the last five years. This increase in data shows an increase in the number of children entering the correctional system, which is also an important indicator for the evaluation of the juvenile criminal justice system, the effectiveness of preventive efforts, and the capacity of institutions to provide proper coaching in accordance with children's rights. The development of this number of residents is of special concern, not only in terms of institutional capacity, but also in terms of the readiness of coaching programs, education, and psychological aspects that must be provided to the fostered children in a proportionate and sustainable manner.

3.3 Legal Perspectives Related to Children at LPKA

Legal protection of children, including children in the Children's Special Development Institution, is one of the fundamental issues regulated in various national and international regulations. In Indonesia, legal protection for children is comprehensively regulated in Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection, which is an amendment to Law Number 23 of 2002. This law affirms that every child has the right to protection, including in situations that are against the law or in a correctional environment. These rights include the right to education, health, a sense of security, and the opportunity to develop optimally in accordance with their

capacity. In its implementation, law enforcement plays a crucial role in reviewing and implementing regulations that are in accordance with the characteristics of each child's case, in order to ensure that the protection of their rights is maintained (Indrayanti, 2022) Internationally, Indonesia has also ratified the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*) through Presidential Decree No. 36 of 1990. The CRC emphasizes that children must be protected from discrimination, violence, and neglect. The Convention stipulates that the detention of children should be a last resort and for the shortest possible duration, while taking into account developmental needs. Child protection is closely related to obtaining absolute and fundamental human rights that cannot be reduced by one (Wasiati, 2020).

For ABH, the law requires a different approach through the juvenile criminal justice system regulated in Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System (SPPA) which prioritizes the principle of *restorative justice* which aims to reconcile the parties involved without having to impose severe punishment on the child. The big challenge is that many Children's Special Development Institutions are not fully child-friendly, both in terms of physical facilities and psychosocial approaches where the government and the community are responsible for protecting and guaranteeing basic rights. Policy reform is also needed to ensure that legal protection for children in LPKA is not only a formality, but is actually realized in practice. (UNICEF, 2023). The most significant challenge faced in implementing the principles of restorative justice in the LPKA context, especially in terms of psychosocial infrastructure, is that family participation in the restorative process for children in LPKA is still less than optimal. This is due to the continued negative stigma, the costs and time required by families, and the families' ignorance about restorative justice.

Through applicable regulations, such as Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Child Criminal Justice System, the state ensures that every child continues to receive fair, decent treatment, and in accordance with the principles of child protection. Child protection efforts are not limited to aspects of daily life, but must also be implemented comprehensively in legal procedures when children are involved in criminal cases (Irawati, 2021). In the context of LPKA, the existence of the law is the foundation in organizing educational and rehabilitative coaching. Thus, the law is an important foundation in creating a safe LPKA environment, supporting children's psychosocial recovery, and encouraging social reintegration.

3.4 Strategies for finding Children's Hope and Emotional Balance

In the legal process in the Child Special Development Institution, finding hope and maintaining emotional balance is an important element. The existence of a Child Protection Law to guarantee and protect children and their rights so that they can live, grow, develop, and participate optimally in accordance with the dignity and dignity of humanity, as well as receive protection from violence and discrimination (Affandi, 2016). In the process of rehabilitation for Children Facing the Law in correctional institutions. Children in prison are vulnerable to mental distress due to separation from their families, loss of freedom, stigma from society, and uncertainty in the future so that children need protection. Problems related to child protection can also arise from within the child himself, for example due to being involved in bad associations or being trapped in a negative social environment, so that children have a way of thinking that only focuses on things that are not positive (Harefa & Sitompul, 2021).

Counselors and psychologists serve as initiators in the process, helping children create ways to deal with problems in a healthy way. On the other hand, social support plays an important role in maintaining children's emotional balance. In addition, education and spiritual guidance also contribute to creating hope and meaning in life. Formal and non-formal learning activities provide children with knowledge and skills. Spiritual development through religious activities or reflection on life values helps build moral awareness and inner peace, which ultimately strengthens emotional balance. Another important factor is the support from the family. Efforts to reunite families and regular positive communication have a major impact on a child's

emotional stability. The following efforts to strengthen the balance of emotions and expectations in LPKA are described in the table below.

Table 1. Strategies for finding Children's Hope and Emotional Balance at LPKA I Blitar

Aspects	Approaches/Interventions	Purpose	Coach
Psychological	Individual and group counseling	Provide space for emotional and trauma expression	Psychologist, LPKA counselor
Social-Emotional	Program peer-support dan mentoring	Fostering a sense of belonging and empathy between children	Volunteers, older children
Education	Hope class (future hope, <i>life skills</i>)	Cultivate life purpose and passion for learning	Teachers, Education volunteers
Spiritual	Spiritual guidance and reflection on the value of life	Giving meaning to life and inner peace	Religious Builders, Spiritual Figures
Family	Reunification or positive communication with family	Strengthen emotional support and self-identity	Parents, family companions
LPKA Environment	Creating a <i>child-friendly correctional</i> environment	Preventing excessive psychological pressure from the correctional system	LPKA officers, government

From the description of table 3.4 above, it can be seen that the success of this strategy is greatly influenced by the condition of the penitentiary itself. LPKAs that apply the principles of a child-friendly correctional environment tend to be more effective in maintaining children's mental balance. A safe, non-oppressive, and supported environment by competent and empathetic officers will create a healthy and dignified rehabilitation climate. By implementing these approaches/strategies in a complete and integrated manner, children's correctional institutions can be transformed into rehabilitation places that not only detain, guard, but also heal and provide new hope for the future of children who have been involved in legal problems.

4. Conclusion

Children in the Children's Special Development Institution (LPKA) do not always represent individuals who have lost their zest (vision) for life, but rather show high potential for psychological resilience in the midst of environmental limitations and pressures. This resilience is seen through their ability to stay emotionally afloat, maintain hope, and rebuild a positive self-identity despite being in the correctional system.

Strategies for finding hope and maintaining emotional balance for children in LPKA can be implemented through intensive counseling services, empowerment education, religious and arts activities, and family support. This approach helps children manage their emotions, build self-confidence, and view the future more positively. Policy strategies for integrating a child psychology approach into the juvenile criminal justice system include strengthening regulations and psychological services to monitor children's mental health, as well as establishing intensive communication with children's families. This approach helps children manage their emotions, build self-confidence, and develop a more positive outlook on the future, in accordance with the Child Criminal Justice System Law (SPPA), which consists of 15 chapters and 108 article, particularly Article 3, which guarantees the protection of children's rights throughout every stage of the criminal justice process.

The formulation of parameters for assessing the success of the child emotional recovery program at LPKA can be compiled based on the principles of child protection in Law No. 11 of 2012 (SPPA Law), with a focus on a restorative approach, fulfillment of children's rights, and psychosocial recovery as indicators of the effectiveness of its implementation, namely that every child continues to receive fair, appropriate treatment in accordance with the principles of child

protection and the existence of educational and rehabilitative guidance to develop the character of children so that they can return to society better.

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