

Effectiveness of Restorative Justice Implementation in Assault Cases at the North Padang Lawas District Attorney's Office

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation and effectiveness of terminating prosecution on restorative justice grounds in assault cases at the North Padang Lawas District Attorney's Office. It employs an empirical legal (socio-legal) approach with a qualitative case-study design. Primary data were obtained from purposively selected categories of informants directly involved in case handling, while documentary data comprised case registers, the 2024 restorative justice case file, relevant legislation, and recent scholarly literature. The 2024 case was assessed against Attorney General Regulation No. 15 of 2020, and institutional effectiveness was analyzed using Soerjono Soekanto's five factors of legal effectiveness, supported by source and methodological triangulation. From January 2024 to June 2026, three assault cases were recorded: one case was terminated through restorative justice in 2024, while two cases proceeded to trial in 2025. The 2024 case demonstrates a voluntary settlement process, offender accountability, victim forgiveness, community participation, hierarchical approval, and termination of prosecution. The one-in-three proportion is descriptive and should not be treated as a stand-alone measure of effectiveness. The legal framework, prosecutorial facilitation, and available facilities support implementation, whereas limited human resources, divergent interests, victim willingness, and uneven public understanding constrain its reach. Restorative justice is therefore procedurally operational in eligible cases; however, broader substantive effectiveness cannot be generalized from the small case population and requires stronger case-level documentation and post-settlement evaluation.



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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary criminal law has increasingly shifted from an exclusively retributive orientation toward approaches that place victim recovery, offender accountability, stakeholder participation, and the restoration of social relationships among the central objectives of case resolution. Restorative justice does not eliminate the function of criminal law; rather, it offers a mode of resolution that is more responsive to the concrete harms caused by criminal conduct. Within this framework, crime is understood not merely as an offense against the state, but also as an event that causes harm to individuals and communities. Accordingly, an appropriate legal response should provide space for restoration, acknowledgment of responsibility, and social reintegration (Setyowati, 2020; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2020). Indonesian scholarship likewise emphasizes that restorative justice should be understood as a broader approach than the mere termination of a case; the quality of the process, the voluntariness of settlement, victim protection, proportionality, and the sustainability of recovery are essential components in assessing whether justice has been achieved (Baihaky & Isnawati, 2024; Sukardi & Purnama, 2022).

Within Indonesia's prosecution system, the institutional basis for prosecutors to apply restorative justice was strengthened through Regulation of the Attorney General of the Republic of Indonesia Number 15 of 2020 on Termination of Prosecution Based on Restorative Justice. The regulation requires prosecutorial decisions to take into account restoration to the original condition, a balanced protection of victims' and offenders' interests, propriety, morality, public order, and community responses. At the same time, the authority of the Attorney General's Office as the state

institution exercising prosecutorial power was reaffirmed by Law Number 11 of 2021. Several studies argue that this framework broadens the scope of prosecutorial discretion; however, its implementation must remain within the boundaries of legality, accountability, and supervision so that discretion does not result in inconsistent decision-making (Arofa, 2021; Hakim & Amedi, 2023; Faisol & Anadi, 2024).

This normative context became even more significant following the entry into force of Law Number 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code on January 2, 2026. The National Criminal Code provides a statutory basis for several grounds on which prosecutorial authority may lapse, including out-of-court settlement under conditions prescribed by legislation. Lubis, Humario, and Mukti (2024) show that this development strengthens the need to harmonize restorative-justice-based prosecution termination policies with the national criminal law framework. Consequently, examining prosecutorial practice during the 2024-2026 transition period is important not only for describing procedures, but also for assessing how legal rules, law-enforcement actors, facilities, public acceptance, and legal culture operate in combination.

Assault cases provide a relevant context for evaluating restorative justice because the harm is personal and is often embedded in social or familial relationships. On the one hand, this relational dimension may create opportunities for dialogue and restoration. On the other hand, physical injury, power imbalances, family pressure, or a victim's preference for a judicial determination may make settlement inappropriate or unattainable. The success of restorative justice in assault cases therefore cannot be inferred merely from the existence of family ties or the signing of a settlement agreement. The process must assess voluntariness, the victim's interests, offender accountability, compliance with legal requirements, and the prospects for safe reintegration. Gultom and Manalu (2023), in their study of the Medan District Attorney's Office, found that the application of restorative justice to minor assault cases depends heavily on victim readiness and the prosecutor's ability to facilitate settlement. Ningrum, Sulistyowati, and Arsetyo (2023), studying the Sragen District Attorney's Office, likewise demonstrate the importance of structured examination of the suspect and evidence as well as a structured settlement process at the prosecution stage.

More recent empirical studies reveal a similar pattern while also demonstrating local variation. Ardiano (2025) found that only some assault cases handled by the Jombang District Attorney's Office during 2022-2024 were successfully resolved through restorative justice, with obstacles including victim readiness, public understanding, and institutional capacity. Taufik and Nirmala (2024) show that the successful use of restorative justice for adult offenders at the East Lombok District Attorney's Office was preceded by an assessment of formal eligibility requirements and followed by meetings among the parties to seek resolution. Studies of prosecutorial considerations in other types of cases similarly show that terminating prosecution is not a mechanical process; prosecutors must assess both legal requirements and the interests of victims and the community (Isfarin & Saputra, 2024; Arifin et al., 2023). These findings reinforce the proposition that effectiveness should be evaluated through the process and the quality of outcomes, rather than solely through the number of cases terminated.

Although the literature on restorative justice in Indonesia continues to expand, three important gaps remain. First, some studies focus on normative descriptions or general procedures without explicitly testing whether the facts of a particular case satisfy each category of requirements and procedural stages under Attorney General Regulation No. 15 of 2020. Second, empirical studies often use the number of terminated cases as the primary indicator of effectiveness, even though such percentages do not establish whether a case was legally eligible, whether the victim consented voluntarily, or whether restoration was sustained after prosecution was terminated. Third, research on the North Padang Lawas District Attorney's Office remains limited, even though geographical conditions, kinship relations, access to facilities, and local conflict-resolution practices may influence implementation. Accordingly, this study does not claim novelty in the concept of restorative justice itself; rather, it offers a micro-empirical contribution by combining a compliance assessment under Attorney General Regulation No. 15 of 2020 with an analysis of Soerjono Soekanto's five factors of legal effectiveness and an outcome assessment that distinguishes procedural effectiveness from substantive effectiveness.

The object of this study is the implementation of restorative justice in assault cases handled by the North Padang Lawas District Attorney's Office from January 2024 to June 2026. The research data record three assault cases during this period: one case in 2024 was resolved through termination of prosecution based on restorative justice, two cases in 2025 proceeded to trial, and no assault cases were recorded in the research data from January to June 2026. The small number of cases requires particular caution in interpretation; the proportion of one out of three cases cannot automatically be translated into a 33.3 percent institutional success rate. This study therefore treats the figure only as a description of the available case population and assesses effectiveness through normative compliance, the quality of facilitation, restorative outcomes, acceptance by the parties, institutional support, and social constraints.

Against this background, the study addresses two principal questions. First, how is prosecution termination based on restorative justice implemented in assault cases at the North Padang Lawas District Attorney's Office, and to what extent is the practice consistent with Attorney General Regulation No. 15 of 2020? Second, how effective is its implementation when examined through the factors of law, law enforcement, facilities or infrastructure, community, and legal culture? The answers to these questions are expected to provide a practical contribution in the form of documentation and evaluation indicators that distinguish administrative success, restorative success, and the limits of the reach of restorative justice at the district prosecution level.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs empirical legal research using a socio-legal approach and a qualitative case-study design. This approach was selected because the research problem extends beyond the normative content of Attorney General Regulation No. 15 of 2020 to include how the regulation is implemented by prosecutors, experienced by victims and offenders, and shaped by institutional and social conditions within the jurisdiction of the North Padang Lawas District Attorney's Office. The case-study design enables an in-depth examination of processes within a specific institutional unit while linking field findings to the normative framework and the theory of legal effectiveness. Principles of qualitative research design were applied to maintain coherence among the research questions, data sources, categorization process, and conclusions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research was conducted at the North Padang Lawas District Attorney's Office, using the institution's official nomenclature. Case data were delimited to the period from January 2024 to June 2026. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with categories of informants purposively selected on the basis of their direct involvement in case handling, including officials of the General Crimes Section/the Head of the General Crimes Section, Public Prosecutors who handled the relevant cases, and offenders and victims involved in the restorative justice process. The available source notes do not specify the number of individual informants in each category. Accordingly, this study does not reconstruct undocumented numbers and identifies this omission as a methodological limitation. Informants were selected because they possessed direct knowledge of case screening, settlement processes, decisions to continue or terminate prosecution, or first-hand experience as persons affected by the process.

The interviews addressed five thematic areas: (1) case selection and eligibility assessment; (2) the process of offering settlement, mediation, apology, forgiveness, and restoration; (3) the roles of prosecutors, family members, community leaders, and supporting facilities; (4) the reasons a case could or could not be resolved restoratively; and (5) perceptions of outcomes and implementation barriers. Observation was not used as a primary data source because the verifiable research records identify interviews and documentation as the principal methods of data collection. Accordingly, the methodological account is limited to techniques supported by the available research evidence.

Documentary data consist of the recapitulation of assault cases from 2024 to June 2026, the 2024 restorative justice case file identified by the register available in the research documents, records or information concerning the settlement process referred to by informants, and primary legal materials. The principal primary legal materials are Regulation of the Attorney General of the Republic of Indonesia Number 15 of 2020, Law Number 11 of 2021 amending Law Number 16 of 2004 on the

Attorney General's Office of the Republic of Indonesia, and Law Number 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code. Secondary materials include scholarly journal articles published between 2018 and 2026 and the second edition of the UNODC Handbook on Restorative Justice Programmes (2020). Official or reputable news sources were used only to triangulate contextual facts already present in the data, not as substitutes for case files.

The analysis was conducted in four stages. First, interview and documentary data were reduced and organized into information concerning chronology, legal requirements, settlement processes, outcomes, and barriers. Second, the facts of the 2024 case were mapped against the relevant provisions of Attorney General Regulation No. 15 of 2020, particularly the considerations under Article 4, the requirements under Article 5, the offering of settlement at the prosecution stage, the voluntariness of the process, the written settlement agreement, and the approval mechanism for terminating prosecution. Third, institutional findings were categorized using Soerjono Soekanto's five factors of law-enforcement effectiveness: law, law-enforcement actors, facilities/infrastructure, community, and culture (Soekanto, 2022). Fourth, the findings were synthesized to distinguish procedural effectiveness, restorative effectiveness, and the scope of implementation. Under this framework, the percentage of terminated cases is not treated as a stand-alone indicator.

Data validity was strengthened through source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation compared statements from prosecutorial officials with statements from parties connected to the cases and with the available documents. Methodological triangulation compared interview findings, case data, legal materials, and relevant public sources. To preserve validity, information unsupported by case-level evidence was not converted into factual conclusions. Specifically, the research documents establish only that two cases in 2025 proceeded to trial; they do not contain records of rejected settlement offers or separate explanations identifying which requirement failed in each case. The analysis therefore distinguishes between general barriers emerging from interviews and specific reasons that can be verified for individual cases. This approach is essential to avoid filling evidentiary gaps with assumptions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION \

Profile of Assault Cases and the Position of Restorative Justice Data

The research data show that three assault cases were recorded in the dataset used for this study between January 2024 and June 2026. In 2024, one case was recorded and prosecution was terminated on restorative justice grounds. In 2025, two cases were recorded and both proceeded to trial. No assault cases were recorded in the research data from January to June 2026. The structure of these data is presented in Table 1.

No.	Period	Number of Cases	Proceeded to Trial	Restorative Justice
1	January-December 2024	1	0	1
2	January-December 2025	2	2	0
3	January-June 2026	0	0	0
	Total	3	2	1

Source: Research case data, processed by the authors (2026).

Arithmetically, one of the three cases, or approximately 33.3 percent, ended through restorative justice, while two of the three cases, or approximately 66.7 percent, proceeded to trial. However, these figures are not treated as an effectiveness rate. A case that proceeds to trial may indicate that legal requirements were not satisfied, no settlement was reached, the victim did not consent, or other considerations made termination of prosecution inappropriate. Thus, a higher number of terminated cases does not necessarily indicate more effective law enforcement; pressuring parties to settle merely to increase the termination rate would be inconsistent with the voluntary character of restorative justice. This perspective is consistent with UNODC (2020), which identifies party consent, safety, fairness, and

restoration as core features of restorative programmes, and with Baihaky and Isnawati (2024), who caution against reducing restorative justice to the mere termination of cases.

This interpretation is also important for avoiding denominator bias because the case population is very small. A change of only one case would alter the percentage substantially. The study therefore evaluates effectiveness across three dimensions. First, procedural effectiveness refers to the institution's capacity to apply legal requirements and procedural stages in accordance with the regulation. Second, substantive effectiveness refers to the achievement of restoration, accountability, victim acceptance, and a settlement reached without coercion. Third, institutional effectiveness refers to the support provided by prosecutors, facilities, the community, and documentation systems that allow the mechanism to be implemented consistently. This distinction produces a more proportionate evaluation than reliance on settlement ratios alone.

Implementation of Restorative Justice in the 2024 Case

According to the research data, the 2024 case was the only assault case during the study period in which prosecution was terminated through restorative justice. The internal case file records the matter under Register PDM-21/Eoh.2/06/2024. The available research materials contain inconsistent descriptions of the underlying conflict: one account refers to an inter-family land dispute, while another describes an assault committed against the offender's child. To avoid reproducing inconsistent facts, this study relies on information that can be triangulated. An ANTARA report dated July 2, 2024 concerning the North Padang Lawas District Attorney's Office described a father-child case involving a suspect identified by the initial S, who was charged under Article 351(2), subsidiary Article 351(1), in conjunction with Article 356(1) of the Criminal Code. The same source reported that prosecution was terminated following a multi-level settlement process. This public source is used to corroborate contextual information and does not replace the case file as the primary source (Said, 2024).

The implementation stages identified through interviews and research documents began at the stage of handing over the suspect and evidence, when the Public Prosecutor assessed the possibility of a restorative resolution. Before the formal prosecutorial process, settlement efforts could arise within the family or through community leaders. If the matter remained unresolved, the prosecutor offered a settlement process, brought the victim and offender together, and facilitated dialogue. In this forum, the offender was given an opportunity to acknowledge the conduct and apologize, while the victim was given space to describe the harm suffered and determine a position free from coercion. If an agreement was reached, the settlement was documented in writing and reported through the prosecutorial hierarchy to obtain approval for termination of prosecution. This pattern is consistent with Ningrum et al. (2023), who identify Phase II as an important point for initiating settlement at the prosecution stage, and with Hakim and Amedi (2023), who emphasize that termination of prosecution must remain grounded in an administratively accountable mechanism.

The prosecutor's role in this process extends beyond administrative functions. The prosecutor acts as a facilitator who manages the meeting, ensures that the parties understand the consequences of settlement, assesses compliance with legal requirements, and connects the outcome of the process to the Attorney General's Office's internal approval mechanism. This facilitative role is crucial because restorative justice requires balance: prosecutors should not promote settlement merely to dispose of cases quickly, but neither should they close opportunities for dialogue when a case is legally eligible and the victim wishes to pursue such a process. Studies in Medan and Jombang demonstrate that prosecutorial communication skills, victim readiness, and institutional capacity are recurring factors in the handling of assault cases (Gultom & Manalu, 2023; Ardiano, 2025).

From the perspective of restorative justice theory, the 2024 process incorporated elements of participation, acknowledgment of responsibility, relationship repair, and community involvement. UNODC (2020) emphasizes that restorative processes should enable persons affected by crime to participate actively in addressing its consequences, with particular attention to victims' needs and reintegration. In the case studied, apology and forgiveness were not the only measures of success. More significant were the victim's opportunity to determine a position, the involvement of family members

and community leaders, and the existence of a formal process that transformed the settlement agreement into a legal basis for terminating prosecution. Because the parties were family members, restoration of the relationship had particular relevance; however, family proximity can also create pressure, making continuous verification of voluntariness essential.

Assessing the 2024 Case against Attorney General Regulation No. 15 of 2020

A juridical analysis should go beyond a descriptive account of procedural stages. The 2024 case was therefore assessed against the relevant groups of provisions. Article 4 of Attorney General Regulation No. 15 of 2020 requires termination of prosecution to consider the interests of the victim and other legally protected interests, the avoidance of negative stigma and retaliation, community response and harmony, as well as propriety and public order. Article 5 establishes basic requirements concerning first-time offenders, limits on the applicable term of imprisonment, and the value of evidence or loss subject to specified exceptions, while also emphasizing restoration, a settlement agreement, and a positive community response. Articles 7 through 10 regulate the offering of settlement, voluntariness, the prosecutor's role as facilitator, time limits, and written agreements, while Article 12 governs hierarchical approval for terminating prosecution.

Aspect of Attorney General Regulation No. 15/2020	Normative Indicator	Available Evidence	Analysis
Article 4: victim interests, harmony, and propriety	The decision considers the interests of victims, offenders, and the community and is not oriented toward retaliation.	Victim and offender were brought together; family/community leaders were involved; public reporting stated that the community response was positive.	Substantively supported by the available data; the victim's interests must remain central rather than being subordinated to family interests.
Article 5: offender status and statutory penalty	First-time offender; statutory penalty falls within the regulatory threshold; loss-related requirements follow the applicable provisions and exceptions.	Public sources concerning the 2024 case state that the offender was a first-time offender and that the case was considered to satisfy the five-year sentencing threshold.	External corroboration is available; the complete case file remains the best source for definitively assessing the legal characterization and all requirements.
Restoration and settlement agreement	Restoration, a settlement agreement, and a positive community response are present as required under Article 5.	The data and public-source triangulation indicate apology, forgiveness, an agreement, and the involvement of family members, the village head, and community leaders.	Initial restorative indicators are satisfied. The sustainability of the relationship after termination of prosecution has not been measured longitudinally.
Articles 7-10: settlement process	Settlement is offered at the prosecution stage, without coercion, with the prosecutor acting as facilitator, and the agreement is documented in writing.	Interviews describe meetings between the parties, mediation, apology, forgiveness, written minutes, and a report on the settlement outcome.	Procedurally consistent. Because complete transcripts are unavailable, the full dynamics of voluntariness cannot be assessed; conclusions are limited to the available evidence.
Article 12: approval and termination	The settlement outcome is reported and prosecution is terminated after a hierarchical approval mechanism.	Research data refer to reporting the settlement outcome and issuing a prosecution termination order; public sources refer to approval by the Deputy Attorney General for General Crimes (JAM-Pidum).	Procedurally supported by the documents and public-source triangulation.

Source: Processed by the authors based on Attorney General Regulation No. 15 of 2020, research data, and triangulation with public sources.

The matrix shows that the principal strength of the 2024 practice lies in the consistency among the settlement process, stakeholder involvement, relational restoration, and the prosecution approval mechanism. External findings indicating that the offender was a first-time offender, that the offense fell within the five-year imprisonment threshold, that the settlement was witnessed by village and family representatives, and that the community responded positively strengthen the assessment of requirements that are not fully documented in the accessible research materials (Said, 2024). Nevertheless, the analysis distinguishes external corroboration from internal evidence. The complete case file, the prosecutor's legal memorandum, and the approval decision remain the most appropriate documents for definitively testing each requirement. Accordingly, this study does not extend its claims beyond the documents that could be accessed.

This assessment also demonstrates that restorative justice is not synonymous with ordinary mediation. The final determination remains a prosecutorial decision subject to legal requirements and

internal procedures. Assolich and Kartika (2023) emphasize the importance of protecting the interests of victims, offenders, and the community in prosecutorial practice, while Uno, Hidjun, and Igrisa (2026) note that the legal construction of prosecution-termination requirements is directly related to legal certainty. The quality of implementation must therefore be traceable through the reasons a case was considered eligible, the process undertaken, the rights or interests restored, and the legal basis used to terminate prosecution.

The Two 2025 Cases that Proceeded to Trial: Evidentiary Limits and Juridical Explanation

The research data establish that two assault cases were recorded in 2025 and that both proceeded to trial. The available research materials, however, do not provide the case register numbers, charging provisions, records of rejected settlement offers, or screening notes for each case. It would therefore be unsupported to state, for example, that one case proceeded to trial because the victim refused settlement and the other because the statutory penalty exceeded the regulatory threshold. This study adopts a verifiable approach: it explains the normative conditions under which a case may not be terminated and separates those conditions from general barriers identified through interviews.

Legally, Attorney General Regulation No. 15 of 2020 establishes several thresholds that must be satisfied before prosecution can be terminated. If requirements relating to the offender's status or the statutory penalty are not satisfied, if settlement is rejected, if the settlement process does not produce an agreement, if restoration is not carried out, or if the interests of the victim and the community do not support termination, the case should proceed through prosecution. Accordingly, the fact that the two 2025 cases proceeded to trial does not automatically constitute a failure of restorative justice. It may instead reflect the application of legal limits or respect for the victim's choice. Studies by Taufik and Nirmala (2024), Ardiano (2025), and Isfarin and Saputra (2024) similarly demonstrate that formal eligibility, victim preferences, and case context function as important filters before restorative mechanisms are applied.

Interviews in this study identified divergent interests between victims and offenders, as well as the preference of some members of the public for resolution through trial, as general barriers. These factors may explain why not every case can be directed toward settlement, but they are insufficient to attribute a specific reason to either of the two 2025 cases. An official publication of the North Padang Lawas District Attorney's Office dated August 27, 2025 also described the reconstruction of an assault case involving alternative allegations under Article 351(3), Article 351(2), and/or Article 351(1) of the Criminal Code, including consequences involving death or injury. This public source indicates that assault cases in the jurisdiction during 2025 covered a spectrum of seriousness. However, because the publication does not identify the same register number as the research data, this study does not automatically equate that publicly reported case with either of the two cases in the table.

The absence of case-level information itself produces an important methodological finding. The prosecution office should maintain a concise screening sheet for each case recording the alleged offense, whether the offender is a first-time offender or recidivist, the applicable statutory penalty, the value of loss where relevant, the victim's position on settlement, the form of restoration offered, community response, the result of the settlement offer, and the final reason for terminating or continuing prosecution. Such documentation would permit a more accurate evaluation of effectiveness and reduce the tendency to assess success solely by the number of prosecution termination orders (SKP2). This recommendation is consistent with the need for prosecutorial-policy accountability discussed by Hakim and Amedi (2023) and Arifin et al. (2023).

Effectiveness of Restorative Justice Implementation Based on Soerjono Soekanto's Five Factors

The legal factor generally supports the implementation of restorative justice in this study. Attorney General Regulation No. 15 of 2020 provides an operational basis concerning objectives, eligibility requirements, settlement procedures, and the approval mechanism for terminating prosecution. The existence of this regulatory framework reduces the possibility that termination will depend solely on the personal preference of an individual prosecutor. At the broader level, Law Number 11 of 2021 reinforces the position of the Attorney General's Office in exercising prosecutorial functions,

while the National Criminal Code, effective January 2, 2026, broadens the context of criminal law reform by recognizing legally regulated forms of out-of-court resolution. Normative scholarship indicates that the relationship between internal prosecutorial regulations and the statutory framework must continue to be harmonized to safeguard legality and legal certainty (Lubis et al., 2024; Uno et al., 2026).

Nevertheless, the existence of a legal basis does not resolve every issue. Restorative justice necessarily involves substantial evaluative judgment, particularly when prosecutors assess the victim's interests, community response, and the appropriateness of proposed restoration. This discretion is necessary for context-sensitive decision-making, but it also requires documentary safeguards so that similar cases are treated consistently. Baihaky and Isnawati (2024) warn that fragmentation and divergent interpretations may reduce restorative justice to mere case termination. In the North Padang Lawas context, the principal need is therefore not an additional office-level legal basis, but a traceable record demonstrating how each decision was assessed against Attorney General Regulation No. 15 of 2020.

Law-Enforcement Factor

The Public Prosecutor is a central factor because the prosecutor stands at the intersection of legal norms, case facts, and the interests of the parties. The research data show that prosecutors approached victims and offenders, explored the background of the conflict, offered settlement mechanisms, facilitated meetings, and prepared documentation for the approval process. These functions require both legal expertise and communication and mediation skills. Studies by Gultom and Manalu (2023) and Ardiano (2025) demonstrate that an institution's ability to facilitate dialogue is closely associated with successful resolution in assault cases. Effectiveness, therefore, cannot rest on knowledge of statutory provisions alone; prosecutors also require the skills to ensure voluntariness, identify power imbalances, and formulate realistic forms of restoration.

The study identifies limited human resources as one of the implementation barriers. In a district prosecution office handling a wide range of cases, restorative justice requires time for screening, communication, meetings, documentation, and hierarchical case presentation. Limited personnel may make the process highly dependent on individual initiative. Capacity-building should therefore focus on facilitation training, eligibility checklists, standardized records that document voluntariness and restoration, and a clear allocation of responsibilities within the General Crimes Section. This approach is more appropriate than using the number of terminated cases as a performance target, because quantitative targets risk encouraging settlement in cases that are not suitable for restorative resolution.

Facilities and Infrastructure Factor

The research data indicate that restorative justice processes may be conducted at the North Padang Lawas District Attorney's Office and, where necessary, through a Restorative Justice House located closer to the community. Functionally, a neutral, safe, and accessible meeting space is important because the setting can affect the quality of dialogue. Facilities need not be elaborate, but they should protect victim privacy, prevent intimidation, and accommodate support persons or community leaders where relevant. When parties face difficulties attending the prosecution office, village-based coordination may reduce costs and access barriers.

Adequacy of facilities also includes documentary infrastructure. The findings show that the major weakness is not merely the physical space but the absence of structured data explaining why the two 2025 cases proceeded to trial. Digital or administrative facilities such as a restorative justice screening register, archives of settlement or refusal records, and post-resolution follow-up notes should therefore be understood as part of the infrastructure supporting effectiveness. Without such records, the office may have reached appropriate decisions, but the quality and consistency of those decisions remain difficult for researchers or institutional leaders to evaluate in aggregate.

Community Factor

Public acceptance influences the capacity of restorative justice to function. Interviews indicate that some members of the community still understand criminal case resolution as a process that should culminate in trial. Such a position is not necessarily a negative obstacle; for some victims, a judicial judgment may provide stronger recognition of wrongdoing or a greater sense of security. Legal education should therefore not be directed toward persuading the public to choose settlement in every case. It should instead explain available options, eligibility requirements, the victim's right to refuse, the consequences of an agreement, and restorative mechanisms so that any decision is genuinely informed and voluntary.

The finding concerning the importance of victim willingness is consistent with studies in Medan, Sragen, and Jombang showing that party readiness and public understanding are important determinants of implementation (Gultom & Manalu, 2023; Ningrum et al., 2023; Ardiano, 2025). From a victim-protection perspective, Syufriadi et al. (2022) emphasize that restorative justice should function as a protective mechanism that recognizes victims' needs. The appropriate indicator of public acceptance is therefore not how often the community agrees to settlement, but how well the parties understand the mechanism, remain free from pressure, and obtain outcomes they consider fair within the boundaries of the law.

Cultural and Legal-Culture Factor

Interview data include perceptions that the consumption of alcoholic beverages, including tuak, may be present in some conflicts associated with assault. Academically, this observation requires careful limitation. The study does not contain sufficient epidemiological or case-level data to establish a causal relationship between local drinking practices in North Padang Lawas and assault offenses. The cultural factor is therefore more appropriately analyzed in terms of legal culture and patterns of conflict resolution: the extent to which communities are accustomed to deliberative settlement, involve family members or local leaders, accept prosecutors as facilitators, and at the same time respect the victim's right to choose judicial proceedings.

Within this framework, kinship relations and the role of community leaders may constitute social capital for restorative justice when they support restoration without pressuring the victim. In the 2024 case, the involvement of family members, the village head, and community leaders formed part of a process that reportedly received a positive response. Yet the same social capital may become a source of informal pressure if a victim feels compelled to forgive in the name of family or community harmony. A legal culture supportive of restorative justice is therefore not one that invariably prioritizes settlement, but one that values dialogue, responsibility, safety, free choice, and compliance with legal boundaries. This perspective is consistent with Sukardi and Purnama (2022), Muhaimin (2019), and Arief and Ambarsari (2018), who situate community values within the development of restorative approaches in the criminal justice system.

Synthesis of Effectiveness: Procedural, Substantive, and Institutional

Based on the five factors above, the characterization of the implementation as 'reasonably effective' requires analytical qualification so that it is not interpreted as an excessively broad evaluation. The data support the conclusion that restorative justice was procedurally effective in the 2024 case processed under the mechanism: settlement was offered and facilitated, an agreement was reached, community actors were involved, hierarchical approval was obtained, and prosecution was terminated. The data also indicate initial substantive effectiveness because forgiveness was granted and efforts were made to restore the family relationship. However, this study did not measure the sustainability of the settlement, the victim's psychosocial recovery, long-term compliance with the agreement, or recidivism. Long-term substantive effectiveness therefore cannot be established.

At the institutional level, the fact that only one case was terminated cannot in itself be interpreted as a weakness. Restorative justice is not mandatory for every criminal offense. An effective system must in fact be capable of declining the restorative mechanism when legal requirements are not

satisfied or when the victim does not wish to settle. The more significant issue is the lack of case-level documentation for the two 2025 cases, which prevented this study from tracing the reasons for the decisions in detail. This limitation identifies an area for improvement in data accountability; it is not evidence that the decisions to proceed to trial were incorrect.

Table 3 formulates a more cautious set of evaluation indicators. These indicators integrate empirical data with principles of victim protection, normative compliance, and the needs of institutional evaluation.

Dimension	Indicator	Finding	Analytical Status
Normative compliance	Eligibility screening and implementation are consistent with Attorney General Regulation No. 15/2020.	The 2024 case shows settlement, restoration, approval, and termination; the core requirements are supported by triangulation.	Supported for the 2024 case.
Voluntariness and victim protection	The victim understands the available options, may refuse, and is not subjected to pressure.	The data refer to forgiveness and agreement; detailed transcripts concerning the dynamics of pressure are unavailable.	Supported to a limited extent; more detailed documentation is required.
Restoration	There is a form of reparation for harm or relationships and offender accountability.	Apology, forgiveness, and restoration of the family relationship were reported.	Initial outcomes are present; sustainability has not been measured.
Scope of application	Eligible cases are offered a restorative mechanism.	One of three cases was terminated; the specific reasons relating to the two 2025 cases are not documented in the research data.	Cannot be assessed on the basis of percentages alone.
Institutional capacity	Human resources, facilities, procedures, and data support consistent processes.	Prosecutors and facilities are available, but human resources and case-level documentation remain limited.	Operational but requires strengthening.
Sustainability	No recurring conflict occurs and the agreement endures.	No follow-up data for three to six months or longer are available.	Not yet assessable.

Source: Processed by the authors from the research findings, Attorney General Regulation No. 15 of 2020, Soekanto (2022), and UNODC (2020).

This framework shifts the question from 'how many cases were settled' to 'whether appropriate cases were processed through appropriate mechanisms and produced accountable restorative outcomes.' This shift is important because the objective of restorative justice is not to maximize the number of prosecution terminations. Nasution, Jubair, and Wahid (2022) identify a gap between the ideal and the reality of restorative justice in Indonesia's criminal justice system; improvement should therefore focus on regulatory frameworks, consistency of practice, and the quality of case resolution. At the prosecution level, Faisol and Anadi (2024) and Hakim and Amedi (2023) similarly show that the authority to terminate prosecution carries significant accountability obligations.

In the context of the transition to the National Criminal Code, this need for accountability becomes even more relevant. Lubis et al. (2024) note that the new Criminal Code has implications for the legal basis and harmonization of prosecutorial restorative justice. This study does not assess the full impact of the new Criminal Code because the post-January 2, 2026 data period covers only six months and the research records contain no assault cases for January-June 2026. This condition nevertheless underscores the need for further research once sufficient post-Code data become available.

Implications and Recommendations for Strengthening Implementation

First, the North Padang Lawas District Attorney's Office should standardize restorative justice case screening through a checklist that explicitly incorporates the requirements of Articles 4 and 5 of Attorney General Regulation No. 15 of 2020. The checklist should not replace prosecutorial judgment; rather, it should ensure that each element is considered and that the reasons underlying each decision are traceable. For cases that proceed to trial, the principal reason can be recorded proportionately, for example: objective requirements were not satisfied, the victim declined settlement, settlement failed, restoration was not implemented, or public-interest considerations did not support termination. Such data would greatly assist annual evaluation and academic research without disclosing unnecessary personal information.

Second, prosecutors' facilitation capacity should be strengthened. Training should include communication with victims, identification of power imbalances, trauma-informed mediation

techniques, drafting measurable settlement agreements, and assessing whether apologies and restorative measures are genuinely meaningful. This recommendation is consistent with Ardiano's (2025) findings concerning institutional limitations and the need to enhance facilitators' capacity. The quality of the process is more important than the speed of case disposal.

Third, evaluation should not end with the issuance of a prosecution termination order. In certain cases, particularly those involving family relationships or recurring social conflict, proportionate follow-up mechanisms are needed, such as recording compliance with obligations contained in the agreement and conducting post-settlement confirmation after an appropriate period. Such evaluation need not become excessive supervision; rather, it can provide information on whether the agreement genuinely restored relationships and prevented renewed conflict. UNODC (2020) emphasizes the importance of programme design that considers outcomes rather than merely the completion of process.

Fourth, public legal education should emphasize rights and choices rather than campaign for settlement in all cases. Communities should understand that restorative justice applies only to eligible cases and depends on a voluntary process. This message is important for maintaining public trust because termination of prosecution without adequate explanation may be misunderstood as a compromise of law enforcement. By contrast, a transparent mechanism can demonstrate that termination of prosecution represents a different form of accountability rather than an elimination of responsibility.

Fifth, coordination with village governments, community leaders, and Restorative Justice Houses should be developed in accordance with victim-protection principles. Community participation can support reintegration and implementation of agreements, but the victim's decision must remain independent. Community participants should therefore be informed about the prohibition of coercion, confidentiality requirements, and the limits of their intervention. These principles are particularly important in family cases, where pressure to preserve reputation or harmony may affect the victim's freedom of choice.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of restorative justice in assault cases at the North Padang Lawas District Attorney's Office has a clear legal basis and operational mechanism under Regulation of the Attorney General of the Republic of Indonesia Number 15 of 2020. In the 2024 case, the available evidence indicates the offering and facilitation of settlement, apology and forgiveness, a written agreement, the involvement of family and community representatives, hierarchical reporting and approval, and termination of prosecution. Triangulation with public sources also supports the information that the case involved a father-child relationship, the offender was a first-time offender, the case was considered to fall within the required sentencing threshold, and the community responded positively to the restorative resolution. The 2024 case therefore demonstrates strong procedural compliance and meaningful indications of initial restoration.

During the period from January 2024 to June 2026, three assault cases were recorded: one was resolved through restorative justice and two proceeded to trial. The one-in-three ratio cannot serve as a stand-alone measure of effectiveness. Nor should the two cases that proceeded to trial automatically be characterized as failures, because restorative justice is appropriate only when legal requirements are satisfied and settlement is voluntary. The available data do not explain the case-specific reasons relating to the two 2025 cases; this study therefore does not attribute reasons that cannot be verified.

Viewed through Soerjono Soekanto's five factors, the legal framework, prosecutorial role, and availability of facilities support implementation, whereas limited human resources, divergent interests among the parties, variations in public understanding, and weaknesses in case-level documentation constrain the scope of evaluation. The cultural factor is more appropriately understood in terms of legal culture and conflict-resolution practices, rather than as a generalization that particular social habits causally produce assault. Overall, restorative justice at the North Padang Lawas District Attorney's Office can be considered procedurally functional for eligible cases, but broader substantive and institutional effectiveness cannot be generalized from only three cases.

Strengthening measures should include standardized eligibility checklists, documentation of the reasons each non-terminated case proceeds to trial, enhanced prosecutorial capacity as facilitators, rights-oriented public education, and post-settlement evaluation. With these measures, the success of restorative justice should be assessed not by the number of cases terminated, but by the consistency of legal application, voluntariness of the process, victim protection, offender accountability, meaningful restoration, and the sustainability of settlement.

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