

Restorative Justice as an Alternative to Incarceration for Juveniles

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ABSTRACT

The issue of juvenile justice has gained much attention on whether imprisonment is indeed achieving goals of deterrence, rehabilitation and community safety. Conventional measures of punishment usually do not solve the underlying causes of juvenile delinquency, but instead lead to the reinforcement of stigmatization and re-offending. In comparison, restorative justice focuses on accountability, reconciliation, and reintegration to provide a different framework in which both victims and offenders are the center of the justice process.

This paper critically analyses restorative justice as a valid alternative to incarceration when it comes to juvenile justice systems. It examines international legal norms, cross-country best practices, and research findings regarding such outcomes as lower recidivism and community integration. The research also assesses the shortcomings of the restorative practices such as risks of revictimization, and institutional integration. Finally, the paper suggests that restorative justice is a more humane, effective, and legally consistent response to juvenile offending, which is consistent with international human rights standards and developmental requirements of young offenders.

Keywords: Restorative Justice; Juvenile Justice; Incarceration Alternatives; Victim-Offender Mediation; Rehabilitation; Reintegration; Youth Offenders; Comparative Legal Perspectives

Introduction

The dilemma that juvenile justice systems around the world are grappling with is the need to balance between accountability and rehabilitative roles of young offenders. Though incarceration used to be considered the conventional answer to juvenile delinquency, it has been facing growing levels of criticism since it has been linked to high juvenile recidivism rates, negative psychological outcomes, and stigmatization of youth (Feld, 2017). The understanding that children are developmentally different than adults has influenced the international legal practice, especially the provisions

regarding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which prioritizes rehabilitation and reintegration over punishment (Robinson, 2021).

Restorative justice has become an impressive alternative, which provides a process in which attention is paid not only to addressing the harm but also to conversation as well as mediation of the victim and offender, as well as to the participation of the community (Van Ness et al., 2022a). In contrast to retributive justice, which focuses on punishment, restorative models aim to repair the relationships, empower the victims, and make the offenders responsible towards one another in the way that facilitates their social reintegration. Experiences in other countries, especially in New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa, have shown that restorative practices could help decrease the recidivism of offenders, increase victim satisfaction, and make the community more trustful toward the justice system (Wood et al., 2024a).

The shift to restorative justice is also explained through the criminological theory that emphasizes the significance of focusing on the social and psychological aspects of crime and not drawing on the models based on deterrence (Amry & Meliala, 2021). Studies of developmental psychology also indicate that punitive sanctions can impair the cognitive and emotional development of young people, restricting their chances of having a meaningful rehabilitation (Cavanagh, 2022a). Consequently, restorative justice aligns not only with international human rights norms but also with evidence-based understandings of adolescent development.

This paper aims at assessing how restorative justice can be adopted as an effective alternative to incarceration among the juveniles. It starts by conceptually analyzing the idea of restorative justice and traverses on to issues surrounding the problems of incarcerating juveniles. We shall undertake a comparative view and also, we will take into account some international standards of law to evaluate the efficacy of restorative models, and finally we shall provide policy recommendation on methods of incorporating restorative justice within the domestic juvenile justice systems of Pakistan and some international jurisdictions.

Conceptual Framework

Restorative justice has been defined as a philosophy and a collection of practices that aim at shifting the emphasis of justice to a crime cure rather than punishment. Howard Zehr, who is often referred to as the grandfather of restorative justice, defines restorative justice as a process in which all the stakeholders, meaning victims, offenders, and communities, are engaged in the resolution of the outcome of a crime and its future consequences (Michels, 2021). The approach does not adhere to the usual paradigm of retributivism, where the criminal act is seen as a wrongdoing against the state and terms a corresponding punishment as the solution (Plesnicar & Tripkovic, 2024). Rather, restorative justice views crime as the destruction of relationships and communal trust and focuses on responsibility, dialogue, and curing (Sweeney, 2022b).

The restorative justice is based on theoretical underpinnings of communitarian and relational views of justice. Criminologists like John Braithwaite believe that reintegrative shaming, in which offenders are confronted on the damage they have committed to the community only to reintegrate into the community, is an approach that contributes to deterrence without causing stigmatization of those who commit

crimes (Sabouhi et al., 2024). This view justifies the idea that justice should heal the social ties and not divide them by using exclusionary means such as imprisonment. The human rights discourses, especially those that focus on the dignity of human beings, both offenders and victims, also influence restorative justice. Restorative practices focus on the victim and acknowledge the damage caused to individuals but not the violation of legal norms in an abstract manner (Sukardi & Purnama, 2022). This victim orientation is consistent with the wider trends in international criminal law that are now beginning to recognize the rights and the voices of the victims in the courts.

Another difference arises in the results that would be desired by restorative and retributive systems. Restorative models are designed to reconcile, to restore and reintegrate offenders into society as law-abiding citizens, whereas incarceration is aimed at isolating and deterring crime by punishment (Van Ness et al., 2022b). Through this, restorative justice is more developmental and futuristic, which is especially important in case of juveniles whose cognitive, emotional, and social potentials remain developing (Suzuki, 2023).

In such a way, it is possible to conclude that the conceptual framework of restorative justice could be described as a holistic model that incorporates accountability, rehabilitation, and community participation. It questions the vindictive nature of the old juvenile justice systems and offers a paradigm more humane, as well as more appropriate to the developmental needs of young offenders.

Juvenile Incarceration: Challenges and Critiques

There has been a longstanding criticism of juvenile incarceration as being ineffective in fulfilling the objectives of deterrence, rehabilitation and social protection. Detention does not help reform young offenders, instead, it tends to increase the same circumstances that lead to criminal behavior. The evidence shows that juveniles are highly likely to reoffend soon after release as it is always associated with high recidivism rates (Case & Haines, 2021). This recidivism implies that punitive imprisonment cannot deal with the factors that lead to delinquency, including poverty, trauma, or educational and social support deficiency (Washington et al., 2021).

Psychologically, incarceration at a young age may be quite disastrous. Research on developmental psychology suggests that underage individuals are less resistant to the adverse effects of imprisonment than adults, as they tend to be more aggressive, depressed, and socially alienated (Cavanagh, 2022b). Young offenders are highly likely to be placed in an environment where violence, neglect, and a lack of rehabilitative programming are the present trends of detention facilities, and this tendency strengthens criminal identities instead of positive development (Singletary, 2022).

The inadequacies of juvenile incarceration are also further elaborated on by the human rights implication of juveniles being incarcerated. The use of deprivation of liberty should be imposed as a measure of last resort and the least amount of time should be taken (usually the shortest period of time) (Gill & Sartorius, 2024). In the same spirit, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules on the Administration of Juvenile Justice (Beijing Rules) and the Riyadh Guidelines show that rehabilitative and community-based options are necessary (Agu, 2025a). Though these are the

international commitments, most states still continue to employ detention extensively, frequently in situations that do not meet minimum standards of human treatment (James & Vanko, 2021).

The other form of criticism is that there is a disproportionate effect of imprisonment on the vulnerable and marginalized populations. Socioeconomic differences can frequently imply that disadvantaged children are more likely to be arrested, detained and sentenced to custodial sentences maintaining the cycles of exclusion and systemic inequality (Van den Brink, 2022). This raises questions not only of effectiveness but also of justice and fairness in the operation of juvenile justice systems.

Considering these criticisms, researchers and practitioners are raising more and more voices to the effect that incarceration does not fit the special developmental and rehabilitative requirements of juveniles. There is evidence to indicate that alternatives, especially restorative justice models are more aligned with the international human rights requirements and long-term reintegration into society.

Restorative Justice and Juveniles: Models and Practices

Restorative justice provides various models that could be used to deal with juvenile offending by bringing together victims, offenders, and communities in collaborative procedures. The difference between these models lies in the process but the goals of accountability, dialogue and reintegration are common in these approaches.

Victim-offender mediation (VOM) is one of the most used mechanisms where the perpetrator and the victim are brought together and subjected to a structured dialogue by a neutral mediator. This is meant to enable offenders to accept their mistake, apologize, and repay as well as the victims to be given a chance to air out the damage caused to them and have it healed (Jonas-van Dijk et al., 2023). Empirical research suggests that VOM improves victim satisfaction and promotes greater offender accountability than traditional court processes (Van Ness et al., 2022c).

The other notable model is family group conferencing (FGC) model that was initially introduced in New Zealand through the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act of 1989. Families of victims and offenders are involved in the decision process in this approach, with the focus on communal responsibility and collective solutions (Wood et al., 2021). It is globally recognised that the New Zealand model has led to the decrease in juvenile court caseloads and a better reintegration outcome (Akpanekpo, 2025). Other conferencing arrangements have been followed in Canada and Australia where conferencing is viewed as a culture-specific response to issues of indigenous justice (Ekpo & Asananyi, n.d.).

Another type of restorative practice is the community service and restitution programs. These actions force offenders to undertake positive activities that are of either direct benefit to the victim or the society in general. These programs are intended to preserve a social equilibrium and give a juvenile a chance to build responsibility and skills to reintegrate into society (Wood & Suzuki, 2024).

Community panels and restorative circles also help to expand the participation to include a broader cohort of stakeholders such community leaders, educators, and social workers. These are long-term practices aimed at treating not just the particular crime but other social aspects of juvenile delinquency (Gang et al., 2021a). Community voices increase legitimacy and create social cohesion so that the results of

justice will be felt beyond the immediate parties.

Comparative experience provides evidence of the flexibility of the restorative justice models in the cultural and legal contexts. Restorative approaches have been enshrined as elements of child justice law in South Africa, both according to international standards and indigenous cultures of reconciliation (De Haan & Destrooper, 2021). The restorative practices are also part of the wider attempt to overcome the overrepresentation of indigenous youth in the criminal justice system in Canada. Taken together, these models emphasize that restorative justice is not a unitary paradigm, but a dynamic system that can be adapted to various issues in juvenile justice.

Comparative Legal Perspectives

It is impossible to conceive the legitimacy of restorative justice in juvenile cases without considering the way it is incorporated in varied legal systems across the world. International human rights law offers normative guidance but states vary in how they apply it, which is a reflection of legal traditions, cultural contexts and priorities in policies. Comparative analysis shows that there is convergence and divergence in the operationalization of restorative justice in juvenile justice systems.

International Standards

International juvenile justice is based on the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), which obliges states to provide that detention is always a last resort and of the shortest period of time that is suitable (Moody et al., 2024). Article 40 of the CRC further highlights how children who are suspected of committing a crime have a right to an upbringing that enhances their integration into the society and a positive contribution towards it. The desired vision is supported by the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules on the Administration of Juvenile Justice (Beijing Rules) which promote diversion and non-custodial approaches, and by the Guidelines on the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (Riyadh Guidelines) which emphasizes community-driven responses (Agu, 2025b). Collectively, these instruments create a normative preference for restorative approaches over punitive incarceration.

This combination of instruments results in a normative favoritism towards restorative strategies to punitive imprisonment. Restorative practices in youth justice have also been promoted by the council of Europe. Other non-custodial interventions, like mediation, are suggested by the European Rules for Juvenile Offenders Subject to Sanctions or Measures (2008) as the means of promoting accountability and rehabilitation (A. M. P. M. Rodrigues et al., 2022). In the same accord, the European Union Framework Decision on Victims' Rights (2001) encourages the use of victim-offender mediation and ensures these victims have access to restorative mechanisms. These tools indicate a general trend in Europe where rights-based juvenile justice systems are being adopted to give more emphasis on alternatives to detention.

The United States

The United States historically embraced punitive models in juvenile justice, especially during the “tough on crime” era of the 1980s and 1990s, which saw increased reliance on incarceration and transfer of juveniles to adult courts (Chatfield, 2023).

Nevertheless, the critique of mass incarceration and attention to developmental science has stimulated the reemergence of interest in restorative models. The victim-offender mediation and community conferencing programs have been implemented in the juvenile justice systems in states like Minnesota, Colorado, and Pennsylvania (Van Ness et al., 2022d). Evaluations suggest that these programs reduce recidivism, increase victim satisfaction, and are more cost-effective than detention (Pappas & Dent, 2023).

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Europe and New Zealand

Restorative justice has been better incorporated in Europe. Mediation has been entrenched in juvenile justice laws in countries such as Belgium, Finland and Austria, so that it is available in all cases. Typically, the models will focus on voluntariness, victim protection, and proportionality, such that restorative practices will not replace legal safeguards but will instead be complementary to them. The outcome is an ability to have a more balanced system that advances accountability without the loss of the protections of criminal law embodied in procedural protections of criminal law (Ani, 2023).

New Zealand is maybe the best example. Family group conferencing is the most important tool in dealing with juvenile crime since the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989 was introduced. Almost all the cases of young offenders are directed to such conferences where families, victims, as well as community members are involved in negotiating the outcomes. Research has shown this system has greatly decreased the use of formal courts and detention, as well as enhanced reintegration results (Wood et al., 2024b). The case of New Zealand demonstrates how restorative justice can become the foundation of a whole juvenile justice system, and not an alternative thereto

South Africa and Transitional Contexts

Restorative justice has been adopted in South Africa as a form of post-apartheid reform of justice. Diversion programs, mediation and conferencing were codified in the Child Justice Act 2008 and made explicitly related to the rights-based framework of the South African Constitution. It has presented restorative justice as a rehabilitative tool, but has also advanced it as a culturally attractive position that fits the African traditions of reconciliation, including Ubuntu (Maposa & Motilal, 2025). Though obstacles persist in the area of resources and implementation, the South African example shows how restorative justice could be incorporated in larger agendas on transitional and constitutional reforms.

Other transitional societies, such as Northern Ireland, have also utilized restorative approaches to rebuild trust in institutions and communities fractured by political violence. Youth conferencing in Northern Ireland is notable for combining restorative principles with formal legal oversight, ensuring both accountability and legitimacy (Marder, 2022). These cases highlight the adaptability of restorative justice in

contexts of social and political transformation.

Pakistan and Developing States

The juvenile justice in Pakistan is not developed as per the constitutional provisions and the international duties. The Juvenile Justice System Act (JJSA) 2018 attempted to reform the system by removing the Court of juvenile death penalties, the use of separate facilities, and the promotion of diversion. Nevertheless, restorative justice is not widely practiced. Mediation and reconciliation are not institutionalized within the formal juvenile justice system but are used sporadically (Abbas et al., 2022). Cultural dependency on informal structures, e.g. jirgas and panchayats, makes the incorporation of restorative justice difficult due to the systems perpetuating patriarchal and discriminatory practices against human rights principles (Ahmad & Von Wangenheim, 2021).

However, JJSA gives room to incorporating restorative mechanisms, especially in the form of diversion and probationary actions. Article 9 of the Act specifically provides for “diversion,” allowing the Juvenile Court or Juvenile Justice Committee to refer a child alleged to have committed an offence towards restorative options such as reconciliation with the victim, community service, probation, or participation in educational, vocational, or therapeutic programs. This provision is meant to ensure that children are diverted away from the formal adversarial system and instead rehabilitated in a manner consistent with the principles of restorative justice.

New Zealand and Canada have their own models international and indigenous-oriented restorative programs respectively, which can give Pakistan some valuable lessons. It is difficult to change these models to fit the socio-legal realities of Pakistan without doing anything to protect against the abuse that has been historically linked to informal justice.

Comparative Insights

A comparative study can propose that although restorative justice has become internationally legitimate, its implementation requires institutional design, political intent, and cultural adaptation in order to be successful. The New Zealand and South African jurisdictions show that it is possible to integrate the concept of restorative practices as the core values of juvenile justice. Conversely, the examples of the United States and Pakistan show how fragmentation, resource scarcity, and cultural conflicts become a problem.

What stands out is a trend toward the convergence toward, but with much variation in application, the restorative justice principles based on the international human rights law. To a nation such as Pakistan, this raises the criticality of going beyond token reforms to systemic incorporation of restorative justice, backed by some legislative clarity, institutional capability and cultural acceptability.

Restorative Justice as an Alternative to Incarceration

The growing disappointment over the use of punitive interventions in juvenile justice has set restorative justice as a potential and alternative viable alternative to imprisonment. At the heart of this paradigm shift is the fact that conventional custodial sentences do not tend to reform young offenders, rather they lead to

continued recidivism, stigmatization and social exclusion. Restorative justice in comparison provides a model that focuses on responsibility without causing permanent harm to both development and social pathways of juveniles.

The Case for Alternatives

It has been repeatedly demonstrated that incarceration has negative consequences on juveniles such as psychological damage, disruption of their education, and the break in good social relationships (Mitchell, 2024). Besides, the atmosphere in the incarceration centers tends to subject the juvenile offenders to criminalized influences, which diminishes the chances of reintegration. In this respect, the restorative practices offer a non-custodial option that pursues the rehabilitation and social integration at the same time as it examines the damage caused by the crime.

Restorative justice is not a soft option but instead a managed procedure that involves offenders owning up and providing substantial corrections to victims and societies. It has been proved that juveniles who are subjected to restorative processes have lower reoffending rates than juveniles that are imprisoned (Braithwaite, 2021a). This implies that restorative justice is able to deliver the two objectives of accountability and public safety better than punitive solutions.

Integration into Juvenile Justice Systems

A number of jurisdictions have been able to incorporate restorative justice systems in their juvenile justice systems. An example is the statutory incorporation of family group conferencing in New Zealand, which has been hailed as a revolutionary approach, where the community and family are made systemic in addressing juvenile crime (Howard et al., 2021). In the same way, Canada has been building up comprehensive diversionary programs that are based on restorative practices and provide mediation, conferencing, and community service as alternatives to imprisonment (Fawcett, 2021). These models emphasize the flexibility of restorative justice which can be implemented at various points of the justice process- pre- trial diversion, sentencing alternatives and post- release reintegration.

Victim-Centered and Community-Oriented Outcomes

The fact that restorative justice treats victims as participants in the justice process is one of the greatest benefits that restorative justice has above incarceration. Whereas incarceration reduces victims to being peripheral by focusing on state punishment, restorative justice directly involves them, where victims are given a chance to express themselves, accept apologies and agree on reparative results (Sardina & Ackerman, 2022). This victim-focused strategy will not only increase satisfaction, but also the community relationships as it will restore trust and social unity.

It is also beneficial to communities, with restorative justice inspiring local involvement in solving crime and a sense of shared responsibility towards rehabilitation. Restorative practices implemented through the involvement of schools, families, and local organizations decrease the use of punitive state institutions and open long-term preventive mechanisms (Van Ness et al., 2022e).

Addressing Critiques and Limitations

Restorative justice as an alternative to incarceration is not without its critics, in spite of its promise. Opponents of the death penalty claim it is not appropriate to major crimes or it is likely to cause imbalances when it is not uniformly applied. Some express their fears regarding possible force to be used to make victims speak to perpetrators (Xiao et al., 2023). But there are signs that restorative practices, given proper precautions, as in non-coercive participation and qualified facilitation, can be used even where serious harm is involved (provided the victims approve) (Braithwaite, 2021b). Besides, restorative justice can be imposed to substitute formal justice when enshrined in a sound legal framework, but it is important to note that the two are complementary to each other, as restorative justice improves accountability and fairness.

Towards a Transformative Model

Restorative justice can be perceived not as an alternative procedure, but as an element of a wider reconceptualization of juvenile justice. Restorative approaches shift the paradigm of punishment and leniency to one based on justice as process of healing, reintegration, and community empowerment. This revolutionary paradigm places juveniles within the context of development, rather than in the context of a hopeless criminal, which is consistent with developmental psychology, human rights, and long-term social stability

Policy Recommendations and Future Directions

Restorative justice needs to be a systemic change and cannot be a pilot program isolated in juvenile justice systems; it is a change that would engrave restorative principles into the legal institutions, practices, and societal expectations. Based on global best practices and critical scholarship, the following policy recommendations and future directions give a road map of how the concept of restorative justice can be advanced as a plausible alternative to incarceration of juveniles.

Legal and Institutional Reforms

Restorative justice should be entrenched in statutory and procedural legislation of juvenile justice laws. Although numerous jurisdictions permit a discretionary application of restorative practices, they have not been codified in most jurisdictions as the fundamental components of the justice system. To be flexible, legislators must include these features of diversion, mediation, and conferencing at various points throughout the juvenile process, including, but not limited to pre-charge, post-charge, and post-sentence(Braithwaite, 2021b). Courts, prosecutors and law enforcement agencies need to be trained on restorative options so that they are normalized and used instead of incarceration as the default option (Stuart, 2022).

Capacity Building and Training

Restorative justice is only possible when it is implemented by skilled facilitators, who will be able to balance the interests of communities, victims, and offenders. National training institutes or certification systems should be developed by governments to train and certify mediators, social workers, and professionals working in the justice

system involved in restorative processes(T. Rodrigues, 2024). Training should also include trauma-informed approaches to safeguard the dignity and psychological well-being of both victims and young offenders.

Victim and Community Participation

Policies should emphasize on mechanisms that mean meaningful participation of victims and communities. This involves the elimination of structural barriers like lack of awareness, inadequate resources and geographic inaccessibility that currently restrict victim participation. In addition, the community-based organizations, schools, and local councils need to be empowered to co-facilitate the restorative processes, thus integrating accountability and reintegration into the local structures (Gang et al., 2021b).

Safeguards and Standards

In order to be legitimate, restorative justice must be hedge against coercion, tokenism or misuse. It should be voluntary at all times and both the victims and offenders should be informed about the involvement. There must be clear standards of procedures, oversight, and mechanisms to track problems so that the results are not skewed to benefit certain demographic and socio-economic groups over others (Lanni, 2021). Also, restorative justice must never replace due process, but it must be used to augment the current legal safeguards.

Integration with Broader Social Policy

Restorative justice will not work alone without encompassing more social reforms that will take into consideration the social determinants of juvenile offending. Delinquency is greatly caused by poverty, lack of education among other factors such as family breakdown and exposure to violence. They should thus combine restorative justice with educational and mental health and social welfare programs to offer round-the-board support to at-risk youth (Toohey, 2021). The connection of restorative processes and such programs as vocational training, mentoring, and counseling may help improve long-term outcomes and deter recidivism.

Future Directions: Towards a Restorative Society

The future of restorative justice is to be seen in the expansion of its usage beyond the system of justice. Restorative practices can be implemented as a method of conflict resolution in schools, workplaces, and communities, and encourage cultures of dialogue and accountability. Standards of best practice can be further promoted through international collaboration (such as via the United Nations and regional human rights commissions) and cross-jurisdictional learning (Hamilton, 2021). Studies should as well be at the center of this growth. Empirical research that assesses the effects of restorative justice on recidivism, victim satisfaction, and community resilience are necessary to allow models to be refined and policy commitment maintained (Bordeiași, 2023).

In the end, the introduction of restorative justice as a systemic alternative to imprisonment is a paradigm shift: it challenges the legacies of punishments and turns the system of juvenile justice into the field of developmental psychology and

recognizes the dignity of all parties involved. Restorative justice has the potential to change not just juvenile justice, but also the overall culture of conflict resolution in modern societies with coherent policies, capacity building, and engagement of society.

Conclusion

The analysis of restorative justice as a substitute of incarceration of juveniles highlights a sense of urgency to shift the paradigm of juvenile justice to focus not on punitive culture, but on models that emphasize accountability, healing, and reintegration. The conceptual analysis showed how restorative justice criticized the retributive model by reformulating crime based on the violation of relationships and not just of state authority. Restorative practices have the ability to build dialogue and repair as a result of involvement of victims, offenders and communities which can hardly be realized through incarceration.

The arguments against juvenile imprisonment showed that incarceration sentences tend to increase, not reduce the issues that they are intended to address. The long term effects of imprisoned youth include psychological damages, education disruption, and stigmatization just to mention a few. These realities make the quest of alternatives not only desirable, but necessary. The models of restorative justice, such as family group conferencing in New Zealand and victim-offender mediation in Europe, demonstrate that there are viable alternatives, and they can be workable in a wide variety of legal systems.

The comparative views also underscore the fact that restorative justice is not an out-of-the-box experiment but a mainstream reform that is adopted in different parts of the world with different levels of acceptability. These illustrations indicate that restorative justice is flexible, culturally mindful and can be compatible with the international norms like the UN Convention on the rights of the child which stipulates rehabilitation and reintegration as the principles of juvenile justice.

The policy suggestions in this research paper show that restorative justice cannot be successful on its own. It needs extensive legal reforms, capacity building and protection to establish fairness, voluntariness and consistency. Moreover, restorative practices should be incorporated in wider social policies concerning education, mental health, and poverty in an effort to establish a comprehensive system that will prevent delinquency and facilitate rehabilitation.

Finally, restorative justice does not signal an alternative sentencing option, it offers a paradigm shift in the way societies think about juvenile justice. It acknowledges that young offenders can change, victims as the key to the justice process, and communities as the active participants of the accountability and healing. By so doing, restorative justice does not merely palliate the evils of imprisonment but also promotes a more developmental, humane and socially constructive understanding of justice.

The willingness of communities, practitioners, and policymakers to accept this vision is the future of juvenile justice. When well institutionalized, restorative justice can turn juvenile justice into a system of exclusion and punishment into one of inclusion, growth, and reconciliation- fulfilling the promise of justice that secures the society as well as fosters the growth and development of its youngest members

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