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The State's Obligation to Protect Children's Rights Under National and International Law

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Abstract

The state's obligation to protect children's rights is not only based on national law but must also be in line with international commitments. The aim of the research is to analyze the extent to which the state fulfills its responsibilities in ensuring the protection of children's rights in accordance with international provisions, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and national regulations, such as the Child Protection Law in Indonesia. The research method used is a normative juridical approach with analysis of legal documents, statutory regulations, and literature studies. The research results show that although the international legal framework has been adopted into national law, its implementation still faces various obstacles, including a lack of inter-institutional coordination, limited resources, and a lack of public understanding of children's rights. This journal recommends strengthening national regulations and increasing institutional capacity to ensure more optimal protection of children's rights.

INTRODUCTION

Children are an important asset for the sustainability of the nation and state (Farhani et al., 2024), so their existence must be guaranteed and protected optimally. Children's rights, such as life, education, health and protection from violence, have been recognized as human rights regulated both in international law and national law (MacDonald, 2024). International instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provide guidelines for countries to ensure children's rights are protected (Fitzmaurice, 2020; Krappmann, 2010; Lundy & Stalford, 2023). At the national level, Indonesia has adopted these principles through Law no. 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection, which was then strengthened by various related laws and regulations.

Even though existing regulations are quite comprehensive, the implementation of protecting children's rights often faces various challenges. Data shows that cases of violence, exploitation and discrimination against children still occur at an alarming rate (Adami, 2023; Wahyudi et al., 2023). In addition, limited resources, inter-agency coordination, and a lack of public understanding of children's rights are serious obstacles in implementing child protection policies.

This raises an important question, to what extent the state has fulfilled its obligations in protecting children's rights, both based on the international legal framework and national law. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out an in-depth study to identify obstacles and provide recommendations to increase the effectiveness of child protection in Indonesia.

Children are a group that is vulnerable to various forms of human rights violations, both domestically and globally (Davies & Robson, 2016; Wanda, 2023). In many countries, including Indonesia, children are often victims of exploitation, violence, discrimination and neglect, which threaten their optimal growth and development (Lundy & Stalford, 2023; Palines et al., 2020; Van Der Hof et al., 2020). In the context of international law, states'

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obligations to protect children's rights are confirmed through instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (Grover et al., 2023). Indonesia, as one of the countries that ratified the CRC, also has a responsibility to implement child protection principles in national law. However, the implementation of these obligations often faces various challenges, such as weak law enforcement, lack of resources, and minimal coordination between relevant agencies (Faulkner & Nyamutata, 2020). Therefore, an in-depth analysis is needed regarding how the state's obligations in protecting children's rights can be harmonized between international and national law in order to ensure that children's rights are fulfilled effectively (Higgins Dbe Qc, 2009).

In addition, changes in social, economic and cultural dynamics often become obstacles in ensuring the protection of children's rights (Mustikasari, 2024). Poverty, conflict, natural disasters and uncontrolled urbanization create a situation where children are increasingly marginalized. They not only lose access to education and health, but are also trapped in cycles of exploitation such as child labor and human trafficking. This situation requires more active state involvement to ensure that every child gets their rights without discrimination, as mandated by international and national law (Buck, 2017).

In Indonesia, although various regulations have been created to protect children, such as the Child Protection Law and the Juvenile Criminal Justice System Law, challenges in implementation remain. Coordination between institutions is often weak, and outreach regarding child protection policies has not fully reached levels of society. This shows that the existence of regulations alone is not enough without strong commitment from all stakeholders. Therefore, there needs to be better integration between international law and national law, accompanied by strengthening supervision, public education, and adequate budget allocation for child protection.

Globally, many countries still face a gap between international commitments and implementation at the national level. Instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocol provide a strong international legal foundation (Amalia & Magassing, 2023). However, inconsistent implementation, especially in developing countries, shows that systemic challenges, such as corruption, limited institutional capacity, and lack of community engagement, hinder the effectiveness of protecting children's rights. In this case, states have an obligation to ensure that ratified international law is translated into concrete policies and has a direct impact on children's lives (Collins & Wright, 2022).

In Indonesia, the issue of harmonization between international law and national law is still a big homework. Even though the CRC has been ratified since 1990, many implementation challenges have emerged, including how this policy is integrated with local values. In some cases, cultural practices that are not in accordance with the principles of children's rights still occur, such as child marriage and gender-based discrimination. Therefore, a comprehensive approach that combines legal approaches, education and the socialization of human rights values is needed to ensure that children receive maximum protection under the umbrella of applicable law (Lister, 2015).

On the other hand, the state's commitment to protecting children's rights is also often faced with development priorities that are not always in line with child protection needs (Putra Nugraha UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2023). A focus on economic development, for example, often ignores its impact on vulnerable groups, including children. As a result, many children are trapped in dangerous situations, such as child labor in the informal sector, limited access to education in remote areas, and poor health conditions. This gap shows the importance of a more sustainable and children's rights-oriented approach in national development planning (Quennerstedt & Moody, 2020).

Implementing the state's responsibility to protect children's rights requires active participation from various parties, including society, civil society organizations and the private

sector. The state cannot work alone in dealing with the complexity of children's problems (Lundy, 2023; Oktavianti & Nahdhah, 2021). Therefore, cross-sector collaboration is needed to create an environment that supports children's overall growth and development. This includes providing access to quality education, equitable health services, effective legal protection, and strengthening child protection values in society. With strong synergy between international law, national law and community participation, it is hoped that efforts to protect children's rights can be more optimal and sustainable.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method used is a normative method (David Tan, 2021). This method focuses on examining legal norms related to the protection of children's rights in international and national law. This research uses a statutory approach to analyze various legal instruments, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) at the international level and Law Number 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection (and its amendments) at the national level. In addition, (Di, 2020) a conceptual approach is used to understand basic principles, such as non-discrimination, the best interests of children, the right to life, and children's participation rights. A comparative approach is also applied by comparing international and national legal provisions, including best practices in other countries.

In this research, (Alfiansyah, 2021) the legal materials studied include primary legal materials, such as statutory regulations and international documents; secondary legal materials, such as books, scientific journals and relevant research results; as well as tertiary legal materials, such as legal dictionaries and legal encyclopedias. All data was analyzed descriptively and qualitatively to describe the relationship between legal norms, state obligations and the implementation of child protection. This analysis aims to identify legal gaps as well as provide recommendations for improvement. With this approach, it is hoped that research can make academic and practical contributions in strengthening the protection of children's rights at the national and international levels.

DISCUSSION

International law in protecting children's rights

International law has provided a comprehensive framework to protect children's rights through various instruments, especially the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (Janot & Rico, 2020; Lundy et al., 2013; Mubarok, 2022). The CRC, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, is the main instrument governing universal children's rights. This convention emphasizes four main principles, namely non-discrimination, the best interests of children, the right to live, grow and develop optimally, and respect for children's views (Angelia, 2022). The CRC also establishes the obligation on states to take all legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from discrimination, violence, exploitation and neglect (Canning, 2007; Little et al., 2011). Apart from the CRC, there are optional protocols that strengthen the protection of children's rights, such as the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (Kilkelly, 2019). These two protocols regulate additional state obligations to prevent and deal with specific forms of violations of children's rights (Ridzkia Yudith, 2021). For example, the first protocol requires states to tighten laws against the sexual exploitation of children, while the second protocol prohibits the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. Besides the CRC, there are also other international instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (Hoffman & Stern, 2020; Yazdi et al., 2024), which guarantee children's basic rights. as part of the protection of human

rights in general. In this context, children are recognized as individuals who have rights that must be respected and protected, without discrimination on any basis.

To ensure effective implementation, international law requires state parties to prepare periodic reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which is the body monitoring the implementation of the CRC (Gadda et al., 2019; Janot & Rico, 2020; Payà Rico & Bantulà Janot, 2021). In this report, countries are obliged to explain the steps they have taken to implement their obligations, including the policies implemented and the challenges faced. This mechanism aims to encourage accountability while providing an opportunity for the Committee to provide recommendations for improvement.

International law has provided a strong foundation, the success of its implementation depends greatly on the willingness of countries to integrate CRC principles into national legal systems (Kilkelly et al., 2021). Lack of law enforcement, limited resources, and internal conflicts are major challenges in many countries, especially in developing regions (Lelyana & Sarjito, 2024). Therefore, more intensive international cooperation is needed, both through organizations such as UNICEF and regional partnerships, to ensure that children's rights are truly protected throughout the world. Overall, international law has provided a solid foundation for the protection of children's rights. child. However, harmonization with national law and strong political commitment remain the key to overcoming the gap between legal norms and their implementation (Payà Rico & Bantulà Janot, 2021). With a comprehensive and collaborative approach, the protection of children's rights can be realized optimally.

International law also encourages the involvement of various stakeholders in protecting children's rights. Apart from countries, international organizations such as UNICEF, UNHCR, and ILO have a strategic role in ensuring the implementation of international standards related to children's rights. For example, UNICEF often works with local governments and organizations to improve children's access to education, health, and protection from violence. Meanwhile, the ILO through Convention 182 concerning the Worst Forms of Child Labor, sets international standards that prohibit all forms of exploitation of child labor (Saputra & Suryaningtias, 2024). By involving various parties, international law integrates a holistic approach to ensure that every aspect of a child's life is protected.

Although there is a significant gap between international legal norms and the reality of their implementation in the field. In some countries, differences in culture, traditions and domestic legal structures often become obstacles in carrying out obligations stipulated by international law. For example, issues of child marriage or economic exploitation of children are often ignored in countries with strong cultural norms. Therefore, in addition to pushing for legal harmonization, the international community needs to focus on education, advocacy and awareness campaigns to change people's mindsets and ensure that children's rights are respected without compromise. This strategy must be accompanied by technical and financial support to countries that have limited capacity in order to maximize the protection of children.

National Law in protecting rights in Indonesia

The protection of children's rights in Indonesia is regulated in various national legal instruments, which aim to ensure the fulfillment and protection of these rights. The 1945 Constitution, especially Article 28B Paragraph (2), emphasizes that every child has the right to survival, growth and development and the right to receive protection from violence and discrimination (Pribadi et al., 2023). In addition, Law Number 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection, which has been amended through Law Number 35 of 2014, provides a comprehensive legal basis regarding children's rights, including the right to live, develop and participate. This law also regulates the responsibilities of the state, government and society to ensure the protection of children and provides strict sanctions against perpetrators of violations of children's rights.

In addition, Law Number 11 of 2012 concerning the Juvenile Criminal Justice System (SPPA) introduces a restorative justice approach (Sartika et al., 2021), which emphasizes diversion as an effort to avoid the formal justice process for children, and punishment as the final step. The implementation of this law is supported by derivative policies such as government regulations, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPPA) program, as well as education, health and social welfare services. However, the challenges in implementing it are still quite large, such as limited resources in the regions, gaps in law enforcement, and low public awareness of the importance of child protection.

To overcome this, the government continues to make various efforts, including public education about children's rights, increasing the capacity of law enforcement officials, and collaborating with international institutions and non-governmental organizations such as UNICEF. With strong regulations and collaboration between various parties, it is hoped that children's rights can be protected optimally in accordance with the mandate of national law. However, successful implementation requires commitment from all parties, both government and society, to create a safe and supportive environment for Indonesian children.

Even though child protection regulations in Indonesia are quite complete, their implementation in the field still faces various challenges. One of the main obstacles is the limited supporting facilities, such as the Integrated Service Center for the Protection of Women and Children (P2TP2A), which are not yet available evenly in all regions. This makes access to child protection services difficult, especially in remote areas. In addition, weak coordination between institutions, such as law enforcement officials, social institutions and local governments, often slows down the process of handling cases of violence or violations of children's rights. Without good coordination, many cases end up not being handled optimally, so that children do not get the justice and protection they need.

The government continues to strive to increase the effectiveness of child protection through various strategic programs (Fitrianto & Farhan, 2023). One of them is strengthening the role of the community in reporting cases of violence by providing easily accessible complaint services, such as national hotlines and technology-based applications. Apart from that, training programs for law enforcement officers are also carried out so that they have a better understanding of handling children's cases with an approach that is oriented towards the best interests of the child. Collaboration with international organizations such as UNICEF and Save the Children also strengthens the government's steps in creating a safe environment for children (Gunawan et al., 2021). With this effort, it is hoped that not only the law will be enforced, but also the collective awareness of society in protecting children's rights will increase.

Harmonization of international and national law in the protection of children's rights.

Harmonization between international and national law in the protection of children's rights is an important step to ensure the fulfillment of these rights in accordance with international standards and local needs (Mendizábal Bermúdez & Ávila Silva, 2020; Periani et al., 2023). The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which Indonesia has ratified through Presidential Decree Number 36 of 1990, is the main basis for strengthening national laws, such as Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection. CRC principles, such as non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, survival and development, and respect for the child's views, have been adopted in national policy (Sugara et al., 2024). However, implementation still faces challenges, including limited technical regulations, lack of public awareness, and minimal resources (Tazkia et al., 2023). The state has an obligation to respect, protect and fulfill children's rights through various policies, such as the National Human Rights Action Plan (RANHAM) and the National Strategy for the Elimination of Violence against Children. To overcome this challenge, strategic steps are needed, such as strengthening national

regulations, increasing the capacity of legal officials, an effective monitoring system, and public education. With these efforts (Gunawan et al., 2021), the harmonization of international and national law will not only strengthen the legal protection of children but also create collective awareness regarding the importance of children's rights as a shared responsibility (Mambu & Mongdong, 2023).

CONCLUSIONS

Harmonization of international and national law is not only important to strengthen regulations, but also to ensure harmony in the implementation of the protection of children's rights. In the context of national law, although various laws have adopted international principles, challenges at the implementation level remain significant. For example, the lack of technical regulations detailing practical child protection measures often causes policies to stop at a normative level without a direct impact on children's welfare. Apart from that, the gap between central regulations and regional policies is also an obstacle, especially in remote areas with minimal access to legal and social services. Therefore, there needs to be stronger coordination between central and regional governments to ensure that every child, wherever they are, receives equal protection.

Apart from strengthening regulations, public education and increasing the capacity of legal apparatus are key factors in the success of this harmonization. Providing training for law enforcement officers, social workers and related institutions is very important to increase their understanding of children's rights and how to handle cases of violence or violations involving children. On the other hand, public awareness campaigns about children's rights must also be expanded, so that society can play a more active role in child protection. This step will not only support the implementation of national policies but also create a culture of child protection as a collective responsibility. With an integrated and comprehensive approach, harmonization of international and national laws can have a real impact in creating a safe and prosperous environment for children in Indonesia.

The state has a very big responsibility in ensuring the protection of children's rights, both based on international law such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and national law such as the Child Protection Law. Harmonization between these two legal systems is a strategic step to ensure that child protection can be implemented optimally in Indonesia. Through the adoption of CRC principles into national law, such as the principles of non-discrimination, the best interests of children, and survival and development, Indonesia has demonstrated its commitment to providing legal protection for children.

Even though regulations are in place, implementation challenges, such as lack of public awareness, lack of resources, and gaps between central and regional policies, still hinder the effectiveness of such protection. Therefore, strategic steps are needed in the form of strengthening technical regulations, increasing the capacity of legal apparatus, more effective supervision, and public education to build collective awareness. With synergy between international law, national law and community participation, the protection of children's rights can be realized more realistically, guaranteeing the fulfillment of children's rights to live, develop and participate in a safe, just and prosperous environment.

Protecting children's rights is not only a state legal obligation, but also a moral responsibility that involves all elements of society. Children are national assets that need protection to grow and develop optimally. In this context, active participation from various parties, including the government, community institutions, the business world, and families, is very important to create an environment that supports the fulfillment of children's rights. Harmonization of international and national law must continue to be strengthened through continuous regulatory evaluation, improvement of implementation systems, and consistent

supervision. With these steps, efforts to protect children's rights can have a long-term impact on the sustainability of nation-building that is just and based on human rights.

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