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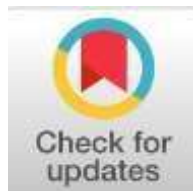
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Judicial Reasoning Patterns In Shariah Courts For Juvenile Criminal Offences: Pola Penalaran Hakim Mahkamah Syariah Untuk Perkara Pidana Anak

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Abstract

General Background Juvenile justice systems require an adjudicative balance between definitive legal certainty and comprehensive child welfare. **Specific Background** Within Aceh, magistrates face complex legal configurations integrating Islamic jurisprudence, national statutes, and prevailing socio-religious values. **Knowledge Gap** Current literature primarily examines the normative implementation of local regulations without adequately elucidating how magistrates construct their foundational logic when handling youth transgressions. **Aims** This study identifies the adjudicative rationale frameworks in youth delinquency cases, analyzes their determining factors, and reconstructs an idealized procedural model. **Results** Magistrates concurrently utilize four integrated frameworks comprising statutory assessment, individual offender evaluation, welfare orientation, and public interest justification. These interconnected paradigms are heavily dictated by statutory rules, personal developmental characteristics, welfare principles, and Islamic ethical foundations. **Novelty** This research formulates the Integrated Judicial Reasoning Model for Juvenile Jinayat (IJRM-JJ), uniquely amalgamating Judicial Reasoning Theory, Child Protection Theory, and Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah into a single cohesive socio-legal structure. **Implications** The proposed IJRM-JJ framework provides a formalized reference for policymakers and tribunals to ensure consistent, rehabilitative sentencing that simultaneously upholds Islamic jurisprudential objectives.

Highlights

- Islamic tribunals employ four interconnected dimensions combining statutory norms with public interest objectives to adjudicate youth delinquency.
- Individual offender characteristics and welfare paradigms heavily dictate the rationale formulated by magistrates during trials.
- The newly developed IJRM-JJ framework structurally integrates pluralistic jurisprudence to guarantee consistent protective measures for minors.

Keywords

INTRODUCTION

In many countries, the judicial process in juvenile criminal justice has evolved from judges merely applying the law to judges playing a key role in delivering justice for children through court proceedings. This change stems from the nature of juvenile criminal cases, which call not only for resolutions as normatively prescribed by legal certainty, but also for psychological development and reconciliation based on the best interests of the child, as well as rehabilitation objectives that cannot always be achieved through the literal application of legal norms. Judicial discretion in this sense enables judges to weigh up various legal arguments, balance competing interests, and determine precisely the type of sanction most appropriate to the child's specific circumstances. Several studies indicate that the development of modern juvenile criminal justice increasingly emphasizes a form of substantive justice as a central quality of judicial reasoning, and that court rulings are understood not merely as the application of the law to legal norms, but are also situated within a 'reflective process' that fosters the formation of law through judicial interpretation [1]–[5]. Consequently, the nature of the legal reasoning judges employ to transform legal norms into concrete decisions is also of paramount importance to the quality of the juvenile criminal justice system—an issue that remains an ongoing concern in the current development of the juvenile criminal justice system.

Although child protection is a key concern in several juvenile criminal justice systems, variations in judges' rulings in similar cases remain a prominent point of controversy in legal literature. These differences stem from the fact that judges do not merely apply the law literally—they engage in a form of judicial reasoning, which involves interpreting the facts, the objectives of the law, and the values underpinning a case. Indeed, as various studies have shown, the scope for legal interpretation available to judges almost invariably leads to disparities in sentencing, resulting in potential variations in the type of sanction imposed, despite general similarities and the fundamental nature of legal considerations, particularly regarding children [1], [2]. This stems from the diverse interpretations of the issues mentioned above, particularly regarding how they relate to determining the best interests of the child, the limits of liability, and the balance between protective and punitive responses [3]–[5]. This debate demonstrates that the quality of a judgement is determined not only by norms regarding what ought to happen, but also by the patterns of legal reasoning employed by judges in constructing their legal arguments.

This is a clear signal that Indonesia is deeply committed to reforming the juvenile justice system, shifting from a purely legalistic approach to punishment towards efforts to protect children. One manifestation of this shift is Law No. 11 of 2012 on the Juvenile Justice System (the Juvenile Criminal Justice System Act), which establishes diversion and restorative justice as the guiding principles in the resolution of cases involving children, from the investigation stage through to rehabilitation, to free children from stigmatization and ensure that proceedings are in line with the best interests of the child [5]–[7]. Judges are also granted judicial discretion to consider the child's characteristics, the prospects for rehabilitative treatment, and the trade-off between accountability and the child's best interests in every ruling [8], [9]; consequently, judges no longer merely apply criminal provisions literally. Nevertheless, the exercise of this discretion does not occur within a single legal sphere, as Indonesia's juvenile criminal justice system is also part of a configuration of legal pluralism found in certain regions.

The fact that Aceh is a special autonomous region has led to progress in the juvenile criminal justice system within a legal framework that is unique compared to other regions in Indonesia. This special status stems from the authority to apply the law in Aceh under Law No. 11 of 2006 on the Government of Aceh, and was subsequently realized through the enactment of Aceh Qanun No. 6 of 2014 on criminal law and the granting of authority to the Shari'ah Court to investigate, try and adjudicate criminal cases. This situation indicates that judicial practice in Aceh is influenced by the interaction between Islamic law, state law, and the socio-religious values of society as a whole [10]–[13] from the perspective of legal pluralism. These characteristics mean that judges of the Shari'ah Court face a more complex set of considerations, as every legal rationale they put forward must not only comply with the national juvenile criminal justice system but must also serve the objectives of applying criminal law within the specific context of Aceh.

Criminal cases involving children are more complex than general criminal cases, as a child may be regarded as either a perpetrator or a victim; consequently, a multifaceted approach is required to ensure their legal protection. In cases where a child is the perpetrator, the judge is required to assess the child's level of maturity, capacity for criminal responsibility, and potential for rehabilitation, whilst also considering how diversion and restorative justice might be applied. Conversely, where a child is the victim, the legal process must focus on addressing only the relevant aspects of their recovery, preventing revictimization, and ensuring that the child's rights are respected in accordance with the principle of the best interests of the child (Uddin, n.d.; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2019a, paragraphs 11–18). In such situations, judges do not merely weigh up competing legal interests, but also balance certainty, child protection, and the objectives of fair sentencing [15], [16]. Thus, the judge's choices in resolving legal questions determine whether justice in criminal cases can be achieved whilst ensuring adequate protection of the best interests of the children involved.

Research into juvenile delinquency is developing through separate yet complementary clusters of research activities. The first cluster relates to criminal law: the application of the Aceh Qanun, sentencing characteristics, and harmonization with the national legal system [12], [13], [17]. The second cluster examines socio-legal services for police matters within the Juvenile Criminal Justice System (SPPA) concerning diversion, restorative justice, and the protection of children's rights in the juvenile criminal adjudication process [5], [6], [15]. Conversely, the third cluster focuses on judicial reasoning through research on legal interpretation, judicial discretion, and decision-making in judicial practice [18], [19]. The fourth cluster, meanwhile, argues that the need for child protection must be driven by a perspective centered on children's rights and the best interests of the child, where laws relating to children can be applied [14], [16]. Although their analytical focus differs, these four research clusters demonstrate that the issue of children within the justice system has been examined from many

different perspectives.

Although research into various aspects of criminal law, the Juvenile Criminal Justice System, and judicial considerations or child protection has developed rapidly, the majority of studies remain focused on the implementation of legal norms, the effectiveness of regulations, and whether the application of the law is entirely in accordance with statutory provisions. These findings provide a valuable contribution to understanding judicial practice; however, they have not yet adequately elucidated how judges construct their legal reasoning when adjudicating Jinayat offences involving children. Meanwhile, studies on judicial reasoning have been developed within the context of the general court system, with very limited analysis of the reasoning processes of judges within the Shari'ah Courts. Furthermore, previous research has separated the analysis of child offenders from that of child victims. It has therefore been unable to explain how these two legal statuses might influence the framework of a judge's deliberations within a single, coherent and comprehensive deductive theory. These limitations indicate that the field of judicial reasoning in cases of juvenile Jinayat offences still leaves significant scope for future exploration.

Notwithstanding the ongoing discourse on criminal law, the Juvenile Justice Act (SPPA) and child protection, this study addresses three research gaps to highlight their significance. Secondly, there remains a tendency in the literature to write normatively about efforts to harmonize the Qanun Jinayat with SPPA law, whilst failing to develop normative standards regarding the legal reasoning of Shari'ah Court judges in handling Jinayat cases involving children [8], [12], [13], [20]. Secondly, from an empirical perspective, whilst evidence regarding diversion, types of sanctions and their effectiveness has been examined more comprehensively, little is known about the patterns of judicial reasoning based on the ' ' of Shari'ah Court rulings [10], [21]–[24]. Thirdly, conceptually, there is as yet no analytical model that links the Theory of Judicial Reasoning and the Theory of Child Protection—as part of legal pluralism—into a single model to explain the configuration of judges' legal reasoning regarding children in criminal cases. The academic basis for this research to develop into a more integrative analytical model lies in these gaps.

By addressing these gaps, this article is not intended to assess the application of Jinayat law or the current juvenile criminal justice system, but rather to develop a framework for judges' legal reasoning in cases involving juvenile offenders. Whilst previous research has tended to be either normative or implementation-focused, this study analyses judicial reasoning as its primary point of entry; it explains how judges formulate legal arguments when national criminal law and Jinayat law concerning children intersect with the principles of child protection that must be articulated in their judgements. Based on an analysis of judgements handed down by the Shari'ah Court, this research proposes a framework for interpreting judges' legal reasoning by integrating the Theory of Judicial Reasoning, the Theory of Child Protection, and Legal Pluralism. This method can provide new conceptual insights for articles in formulating judges' judicial reasoning in juvenile criminal cases. It can serve as a valuable asset for the development of studies on juvenile justice within the context of legal pluralism.

This research was conducted to address these normative, empirical, and conceptual gaps and to elucidate a more substantive understanding of the patterns of legal reasoning adopted by judges of the Shari'ah Court in criminal cases involving children. This is important because legal protection for children within the judicial system largely depends not only on a combination of normative rules, but also on how judges interpret, balance and construct legal values. Consequently, this study does not aim to assess whether a particular judgement is right or wrong; but rather to trace the development of judicial reasoning, elucidate the legal, sociological and philosophical elements that underpin these forms, and reconstruct more integrative models of legal reasoning based on the principles of judicial reasoning, child protection and maqāṣid al-syarī'ah. Consequently, this study is expected not only to contribute to the body of knowledge, particularly in the fields of juvenile criminal law and Jinayat law, but also to serve as a conceptual framework that can be used as a reference for judges in Shari'ah courts, policymakers, and the development of juvenile justice practices in Aceh.

METHOD

This study is a normative legal study that examines judicial discretion in criminal cases involving children, as determined by judges, by analyzing the rulings of the Aceh Shari'ah Court. Given that the focus of this study is not to assess the enforcement of the law or judicial conduct, but rather to understand the legal grounds put forward by judges when interpreting and applying legal norms to a specific case, a normative perspective has been adopted. This study employs the statutory, case, and conceptual approaches to provide an in-depth analysis as required. The statutory approach is used to analyses the relationship between Aceh Qanun No. 6 of 2014, as amended by Aceh Qanun No. 12 of 2025, Law No. 11 of 2012 on the Juvenile Criminal Justice System, and other supporting regulations. However, the case approach is the primary method in this study as its subject matter is the rulings of the Shari'ah Court, whilst the conceptual approach can be used to identify patterns of judicial reasoning based on the Theory of Judicial Reasoning (Darrel A. Hmelar, 2018a), Child Protection Theory [25], and Maqāṣid al-Syarī'ah [25]–[31].

This text utilizes primary, secondary and tertiary legal sources that have been selected and are relevant to the research questions at hand. The primary legal sources consist of judgements concerning juvenile offenders—where civil and criminal law intersect—at the Aceh Shari'ah Court in Aceh Jaya; Qanun No. 6 of 2014 in conjunction with Aceh Qanun No. 12 of 2025 on Criminal Offences, given that children are addressed in this legislation, as well as Law No. 11 of 2012 on the Protection of Children, such as unlawful acts committed by children that fall within the jurisdiction of family and juvenile courts. Secondary legal sources were drawn from articles in reputable journals and books on legal research methodology, judicial reasoning theory, child protection, Islamic criminal law, and maqāṣid al-syarī'ah, whilst tertiary legal sources were utilized to support the interpretation of the legal concepts under analysis. All data were collected through a documentary study involving systematic searching, inventorying, classification and comparison of judgements and legal documents to obtain an

overview of the patterns of judicial reasoning in juvenile criminal cases [25], [30], [32], [33].

Qualitative analysis was conducted using a step-by-step approach comprising content analysis, legal reasoning analysis, interpretative analysis, argumentative analysis, and pattern matching against patterns found in the judges' legal reasoning regarding the specific judgements under study. In the first stage, the content of legal reasoning in each judgement was coded according to the issue, the normative basis, the judges' arguments, and the operative part of the judgement (dispositive). Thirdly, legal reasoning analysis was used to demonstrate how judges write (interpreting the normative facts and legal values underpinning the judgement). The results of this analysis were then compared using pattern-matching techniques to identify similarities, differences, and trends in case characteristics among judgements with similar patterns. Thus, through an analytical framework based on Judicial Reasoning Theory; Child Protection & Maqāsid al-Syarī'ah [30], [31], [34], [35], these findings are interpreted prescriptively and argumentatively as an idealized construction of judges' reasoning patterns in child-related cases falling under the category of criminal offences.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. The Structure of the Legal Rationale of Shari'ah Court Judges in Cases of Criminal Offences Committed by Children

The research findings indicate that the legal reasoning of Shari'ah court judges in criminal cases involving children is not based on a single legal model or pattern. Rather, these findings represent an integration of various normative considerations, child protection principles, and Islamic legal values that emerge consistently across the judgements examined. By utilizing open coding, axial coding, and validating patterns across all judgements and interview data, this study identified four main patterns: the Legal-Normative Pattern and the Individual Assessment of the Child Pattern, the Child Protection-Oriented Pattern, and the Maqāsid-Based Judicial Pattern. These findings indicate that the practice of judicial reasoning in the Shari'ah Courts has shifted from a formal, legalistic pattern of argumentation to an integrative pattern of argumentation. This trend is in line with developments in research on the rendering of judgements, which establishes a perspective that views judges not merely as enforcers of the law, but as legal reasoners who carefully carry out a rational, systematic and coherent process of interpretation within a comprehensive normative system [18], [19].

The legal-normative approach refers to judges' conduct in interpreting legal reasoning by reconciling various instruments governing cases involving children within the criminal justice system. An analysis of these judgements shows that judges construct their arguments not only based on the Qanun Jinayat, but also by relying on other legislation such as the Law on the Juvenile Criminal Justice System relating to child protection, rules of criminal procedure, and general principles within the framework of the national legal system before determining both the elements of the offence (by assessing whether evidence exists or not) and the form or type of punishment. This pattern demonstrates a systematic interpretation, in which the judge has adopted general characteristics that link the specific features of Acehese law with the national legal regime on child protection. This finding corroborates several studies which state that the enforcement of Jinayat law in Aceh is not a self-contained legal regime, but rather develops through harmonization with the national legal system and the development of modern criminal law. According to McCormick (1978), this pattern demonstrates a specific legal justification, articulated about internal coherence; and according to Dworkin, (1996), such interpretation constitutes a constructive argumentative explanation whilst maintaining what is to be regarded as law.

The second pattern is the Individual Assessment of the Child, namely the tendency of judges to carry out an individual assessment relating to the child's characteristics before deciding on the type of criminal liability to be imposed. This study demonstrates that judges consider not only the elements of the offence, but also the child's biological age, level of psychological maturity, family circumstances, social environment, reports from probation officers, educational attainment, and the child's employment prospect for their rehabilitation. Thus, the judge's line of reasoning does not stop at the finding of evidence of wrongdoing, but culminates in a comprehensive evaluation of the child's circumstances as a subject of law. These findings are consistent with developments in the juvenile justice model, which regards individual assessment as a crucial prerequisite before imposing a criminal sentence on a child [15], [36], [37]. This approach demonstrates that the Theory of Justice for Children and Young People must be shaped on the principle of prioritizing the best interests of the child, so that criminal sanctions are not driven by retribution but are instead oriented towards rehabilitation for the child's protection and social reintegration.

The second approach remains the Child Protection-Oriented Approach, which has always served as the basis for judges in adjudicating cases specifically involving juvenile offenders within the criminal justice cycle (judicial process) administered by the Syariah Courts. The child's best interests are the primary consideration; this approach can be traced in the practice of juvenile justice, where judges adopt a perspective akin to that of a father. The imposition of uqubat also takes into account its impact on the child's physical and psychological development, as well as their future education and career. Taking these factors into account, such considerations are always linked to the possibility of implementing rehabilitative measures, guidance and social reintegration, so that sentencing serves as both a protective and educational measure. These findings support Marlina's (2012) research on the rehabilitative orientation of the Juvenile Criminal Justice System, whilst also aligning with the studies by (Cavanagh (2022), Mujiono et al (2025), Walim et al., (2024), which demonstrate that the modern juvenile justice paradigm involves providing judges with the scope to base their considerations on the best interests of the child. According to Freeman and Eekelaar, this pattern indicates that the legitimacy of a judge's decisions concerning children stems from legal certainty and from the safeguarding of children's futures.

In addition to the child protection orientation, this analysis also recommends that judges' legal reasoning should be given strong substantive legitimacy through a two-stage Maqāsid-based judicial approach. This approach is evident when judges

do not limit themselves to a textual application of the provisions of the Qanun Jinayat, but rather interpret them in accordance with the objectives of Islamic law that are oriented towards the public interest. An analysis of these judgements shows that this orientated reasoning lies at an implicit level within an explicit text, where the judges' justifications relate to the protection of life (*ḥifz al-nafs*), reason (*ḥifz al-aql*) and future generations (*ḥifz al-nasl*), so that sentencing becomes part of *ta'dīb* and rehabilitation, rather than merely punishment. These findings are consistent with research on the development of Acehese Jinayat law, which emphasizes the necessity of the *maqāsid* perspective in the enforcement of Islamic criminal law [12], [13], [17]. This orientation is reflected in the realization of al-Syātibī's thought on *jalb al-maṣāliḥ wa dar' al-mafāsid*, whilst Ibn 'Āsyūr and Jasser Auda emphasize that substantive justice in every judgement must be achieved through the protection of human dignity in accordance with the objectives of Islamic law.[38]–[40]

As might be expected, these four patterns of reasoning do not operate in isolation: all four form part of a single, integrated legal argumentative framework within the decision-making process. If we analyze all the judgements, it becomes apparent that first the judges establish the normative legal basis. They assess the children on a case-by-case basis, next they evaluate alternative rulings in the light of child protection guided by the 'purpose-oriented' approach. Finally, they reinforce the legitimacy of the judgement through the values of *maqāsid al-syarī'ah*. This sequence demonstrates that a judge's legal reasoning integrates various points of argument, such that the modelling of formal legality, the protection of children's rights, and the objectives of Islamic law complement one another. This study supports several previous studies on legal pluralism in Aceh, which indicate that the practice of adjudicating Jinayat cases is increasingly oriented towards harmonizing national law, Islamic law, and the principles of child protection [8], [12], [20]. Neil MacCormick views this integration as a principle of coherence and justification, whilst Aharon Barak refers to it as purpose-oriented interpretation—that is, a mechanism for linking legal norms to the idea of the ultimate purpose to be realized through those norms.[41], [42] Thus, the combination of these four patterns constitutes the defining characteristic of Shari'ah Court judges' judicial reasoning when adjudicating cases involving children found guilty of criminal offences.

Based on a pattern-matching analysis, this study found that all four patterns of consideration form a cohesive legal reasoning framework within the rulings of the Shari'ah Court. Consequently, these recurring patterns do not indicate any hierarchy or mutual substitution; rather, they operate simultaneously at every level of legal reasoning. Consequently, a judge not only constructs arguments based on normative legality but, at the same time, weaves together individual considerations regarding the welfare of the child, the principle of child protection, and the values of *maqāsid al-syarī'ah* in determining the optimal criminal liability. This finding reinforces several studies on the development of judicial reasoning that view court rulings as the culmination of an argumentative process that coherently links norms, facts and values [41], [42], whilst also aligning with research on legal pluralism in Aceh, which demonstrates that the practice of adjudicating Jinayat cases has evolved through the harmonization of national law, Islamic law, and principles of child protection [8], [12], [13]. Thus, in cases involving children accused of Jinayat offences, judges' patterns of reasoning have been constructive in nature, operating within argumentative, integrative contexts.

Therefore, taken as a whole and based on all these findings, this study concludes that the model of legal reasoning employed by judges at the Shari'ah Court follows a pattern constructed from four main frameworks: the Legal–Normative Pattern; the Pattern of Individual Assessment of the Child; the Child Protection-Oriented Pattern; and the *Maqāsid*-Based Judicial Pattern. Viewed collectively, these four patterns create a distinctive aspect of judges' legal reasoning in children's cases: namely, that they integrate various aspects of legal certainty, child-centered rights, and the (substantive objectives) of Islamic law into a single, unified argument. This synthesis demonstrates that judges' approach to the law has shifted from one originally dominated by a legalistic stance to one centered on protecting the child and the dynamics of legal pluralism in Aceh. This finding reinforces previous research—which largely addressed the normative implementation of the Qanun Jinayat, or the Juvenile Criminal Justice System—by demonstrating that adjudicative practice rests on judges' construction of legal reasoning to accommodate various indirectly relevant sources and values.

B.Sharia Court judges' legal reasoning regarding children as perpetrators of Jinayat offences exhibits distinct characteristics.

The research findings indicate that the patterns of legal reasoning employed by Shari'ah Court judges in criminal cases involving children are not formed in isolation, but rather emerge from the complex interplay of various factors operating simultaneously in the decision-making process. A content analysis of judgements and transcripts from coded interviews revealed four major groups of factors: normative factors, their interrelationship with the characteristics of the child, poor practices within child protection agencies, and Islamic legal values. These four factors do not function in isolation, but rather form a pattern of mutual influence that shapes reasoning when judges assess the facts of the trial, select appropriate norms, and determine the form of criminal liability for the child. These findings support other studies indicating that judges consider the interaction between legal provisions, case characteristics, social context, and the values prevalent in society—a process that may never be purely mechanical [12], [13], [19], [41], [42]. In line with this, the question arises as to why the pattern of declining quality of legal reasoning observed in RQ1 inevitably occurs with different factors influencing criminal cases involving children; therefore, an analysis is required of the mediating factors that often lead to differing considerations regarding specific aspects of the child.

The first influencing factor in judges' legal reasoning is normative, as several legal regimes apply concurrently in relation to criminal cases involving children. This finding illustrates that judges are not only faced with the Qanun Jinayat as the legal basis for regulating criminal acts, but also with other laws, including the Law on the Juvenile Criminal Justice System, the Child Protection Act, specific provisions applicable to Aceh, and general principles within the national legal system. Such conditions give rise to a process of legal reasoning that develops through the harmonization of norms, thereby preventing conflict between the specific nature of the law—which emphasizes compliance with the law, child protection, and criminal

law. The findings of this study are consistent with research by Analiansyah and Abubakar, Jeumpa et al., Heliany and Tjandrawinata, and Fanisa et al., which explains that legal pluralism in Aceh compels judges to construct arguments or reasoning that systematically integrate national law with Islamic law.[8], [12], [13], [17]. This situation is justified as legal coherence (a view put forward by Neil MacCormick). It is also referred to as constructive interpretation or, simply put, the practice of linking several norms to maintain the integrity of a legal system, as Ronald Dworkin would put it.[41]

This study shows that, apart from normative factors, the individual characteristics of the child are one of the most influential variables in determining judges' patterns of legal reasoning. An analysis of these judgements reveals that judges consistently take into account aspects such as age, psychological maturity, family circumstances, social environment, educational development, reports from Probation Officers, and rehabilitation potential when determining the type of criminal liability. Therefore, rather than treating the child or the child's characteristics merely as background or contextual information—the child is treated as a central part of the considerations underpinning the proportionality analysis. This supports numerous studies on juvenile criminal justice which recognize that the individual is viewed both as a child (whose development is still ongoing) and as a person with the potential to change; in other words, individual assessment must be a determining factor in every form of sentencing in relation to the sentencing process [4], [5], [15], [18], [43]. Based on the Child Protection Theory paradigm, taking these individual characteristics into account reflects the best interests of the child, so that judges consider not only criminal behavior but also all factors relating to recidivism and child protection.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates that, in addition to normative considerations and the individual characteristics of the child, another factor influencing the legal reasoning of judges at the Shari'ah Court is the child protection paradigm. Judges have frequently followed this logic when determining the appropriate form of 'uqubat: they assess the impact of their rulings on the child's recovery process, the continuity of the child's education, family relationships, and the potential for rehabilitation before deciding on the appropriate sanction. Thus, the child protection orientation is not merely understood as a normative obligation, but as a way of thinking that permeates the entire process of legal reasoning. This finding is consistent with several studies indicating that child justice reform establishes the philosophy of the best interests of the child, restorative justice, and social reintegration as the foundations for decision-making in cases involving children [1], [4], [15], [44]. From the perspective of Child Protection Theory, this orientation indicates that judges and legal practitioners are assessed not only based on their reasoning and the logical consistency within individual legal cases—which would reflect the accurate application of legal norms—but also based on how they work to protect children's rights and create a future in which children can thrive following the court proceedings.

The values of Islamic law, particularly the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, constitute the second factor shaping judges' legal reasoning, as these values provide the philosophical foundation for the implementation of criminal law in Aceh. This encompasses three distinct components: 1) the protection of human life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*); 2) the protection of property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*); and 3) the protection of the family line (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*). Analysis shows that, in addition to a formal legal test of validity, judges will also assess the extent to which a ruling serves the public good and protects children and society from harm. Consequently, legal principles are evolving towards the preservation of life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), reason (*'aql*), and lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*) as the primary objectives of juvenile criminal law. These findings reinforce several studies on the application of *jinayat* law and confirm that Islamic law must be contextualized within the interests of public welfare whilst also protecting fundamental human rights [12], [13], [17]. This perspective aligns with al-Syātibī's view of the interconnection between *jalb al-maṣāliḥ* and *dar' al-mafāsīd*, which has also been adopted and subsequently systematised by *maqāṣid*-based theorists who have taken a contemporary approach characterised by an emphasis on contextualism, adaptability, and substantive justice (such as Ibn 'Āsyūr and Jasser Auda). Thus, *maqāṣid* not only legitimise the normative but also guide judges' reasoning as they present their arguments in cases, particularly in juvenile criminal cases.

Essentially, these four factors do not operate in isolation, but rather interact with one another to influence the judicial reasoning of judges at the Shari'ah Court. An analysis of the judgements shows that, whilst normative factors frame the law applicable to a particular case, the specific characteristics of the child serve as the basis for individual assessment. Whilst the child protection paradigm represents an objective that stands in opposition to the theory of sanctions oriented towards criminal punishment, the values of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* provide ethical and philosophical legitimacy to the coherent foundations of law enforcement. This interaction also explains how judges can issue fairly standardized rulings despite variations in the facts and offences. These findings confirm several other studies on pluralism in Aceh, which show that Acehnese judicial practice has developed through an integrative model combining national law, Islamic law and the principles of child protection [8], [12], [13], [20]. For Neil MacCormick, the relationship between these three factors embodies the principle of coherence in legal reasoning; for Aharon Barak, this constitutes what he terms a comprehensive purposive interpretation: reasoning in legal interpretation that links text and purpose with the values of justice. Consequently, these factors not only influence the substance of the judgement but also influence the judicial reasoning of the judges of the Shari'ah Court in cases involving juvenile criminal offences.

Analysis of the cases at this stage reveals that these four factors do not have an equal degree of impact in every case; rather, they exist in a dynamic relationship and remain relevant to what is being analyzed. Where there is an acute threat to a child's safety or development, the balance of considerations tends to favor the child protection model and individual assessment. Conversely, where there is no doubt regarding the applicability of criminal law in a particular case, normative factors and the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* tend to take on greater prominence as the basis for judicial legitimacy.

These findings suggest that legal reasoning is not formulated through a linear arrangement of factors, but rather as a process of negotiation between competing legal interests on a case-by-case basis. These findings support research on judicial discretion which describes a judge's scope of discretion not as unlimited freedom, but as a process of rationalization constrained by legal norms, values and objectives [18], [42]. These findings are also consistent with research on legal

pluralism in Aceh, which identifies the harmonization of these various legal regimes as a distinctive feature of their own practice of justice [8], [12], [13]. Thus, skill in judicial reasoning is determined by the extent to which judges succeed in managing these competing considerations—rather than simply prioritizing one consideration over another.

From the research findings, it can be concluded that, in general, the pattern of legal reasoning applied by Shari'ah Court judges in criminal cases involving children is influenced by four main factors: normative factors, the child's personal attributes, the child protection paradigm, and the concept of *maqāṣid al-Shari'ah*. These four factors operate in parallel and support one another, so that the resulting legal arguments not only fulfil the formal requirements for legality but also protect children's rights and serve the broader objectives of Islamic law. The findings of this study go beyond the scope of previous research, most of which provided only a partial explanation of how criminal law is regulated or enforced; there is a need to further elaborate on the factors influencing judges' legal reasoning in criminal law, particularly the normative and social aspects that operate interactively. From MacCormick's perspective, this illustrates the coherence of legal reasoning; from Aharon Barak's perspective, it represents a form of purpose-oriented adjudication that aligns the language of the law with the values embodied in justice so that they may be realised.

C. Integrated Judicial Reasoning Model for Juvenile Criminal Cases (IJRM-JJ): An Ideal Reconstruction of the Legal Reasoning Patterns of Shari'ah Court Judges in Juvenile Criminal Cases

As mentioned in the previous discussion, the findings of this study indicate that the legal reasoning of Shari'ah Court judges in other criminal cases involving children has been formulated as the result of an integrative process between various normative dimensions, child protection, and Islamic legal values. However, the relationship between these three dimensions remains implicit, and their interpretation depends heavily on how individual judges construct their arguments; consequently, this has not yet led to the formation of a formal and uniform framework of legal reasoning. This situation may give rise to variations in argumentation as well as differences in judgements in cases with compatible features. Several studies on judicial reasoning [12], [41], legal pluralism [42] and the juvenile criminal justice system have also found that the absence of an integrated framework for argumentation is the main cause of inconsistency in judicial practice [8], [13]. Consequently, this study argues that a reconstruction of judges' patterns of legal reasoning is required—not as a substitute for judicial discretion, but as an argumentative framework capable of maintaining formal consistency, legal-logical coherence, and comprehensive legal reasoning in criminal cases involving children.

The Theory of Judicial Reasoning forms the primary basis of this study, as legal considerations in court rulings cannot be separated from the reasoning that links facts, norms and values. Based on judgements issued by the Shari'ah Court, this paper analyses that the number of legal norms cited cannot determine the quality of legal reasoning, but rather by the judge's ability to establish logical, coherent and, more importantly, justifiable connections between the factual evidence presented in court—legally known as 'facts in law'—and the relevant legal basis. This notion of coherent legal argumentation is consistent with Neil MacCormick's understanding of legal coherence and justification, which essentially states that the rationality of an argument is the root source for legitimizing a judgement. This is supported by Ronald Dworkin's constructive interpretation and Aharon Barak's purposive interpretation, which hold that one must be able to interpret the law holistically within the concept of justice [18], [41], [42]. This study utilizes these findings to establish a foundation for the quality of judicial reasoning within the framework, thereby constructing an integrated IJRM-JJ model—bearing in mind that the process of legal reasoning always begins with judicial reasoning, whether sound or flawed.

Subsequently, the Theory of Child Protection defines the best interests of the child as the primary guiding principle throughout the entire process of legal reasoning. Research findings indicate that judges' reasoning cannot be separated from an assessment of the child's specific circumstances, prospects for rehabilitation, and the decision most likely to promote the child's development and future. Based on this analysis, the judicial reasoning process does not stop merely at a conviction regarding the alleged offence, but evolves into a functioning mechanism; a mechanism that protects the child as the holder of individual rights within the juvenile criminal justice system. These findings are consistent with several studies that present the child protection paradigm as a key element in the development of the juvenile justice system, linked to the best interests of the child [45], restorative justice [46], or social reintegration [4], [5], [15], [43], [44]. Within this framework, Child Protection Theory forms the second pillar of the IJRM-JJ: when legal considerations involving children are concerned, such considerations must be oriented solely towards protection, guidance, and rehabilitation, without undermining the function of criminal liability as set out in criminal law.

The third pillar of the Integrated Judicial Reasoning Model for Juvenile Jinayat (IJRM-JJ) is *Maqāṣid al-Syari'ah*, which serves as the philosophical basis underpinning all previous phases of a judge's legal reasoning. This study concludes that applying Jinayat law to children based on normative appropriateness or child protection is insufficient; rather, it must be directed toward achieving *maslahah* as the primary objective of Sharia. Thus, judicial reasoning must be sufficient to uphold *ḥifẓ al-nafs*, *ḥifẓ al-aql*, and *ḥifẓ al-nasl* as the three most relevant *maqāṣid* objectives for cases involving children. This finding reinforces several previous studies that position the *maqāṣid* as an essential methodological tool in the construction of modern Islamic law, particularly in criminal law and the protection of children's rights [12], [13], [17]. According to al-Syātibī, a law is only valid if it achieves *maslahah*, whilst Ibn 'Āsyūr and Jasser Auda consider the *maqāṣid* in the context of enabling the law to adapt to societal developments. Thus, the *maqāṣid* serve as a moral foundation that informs judges; you can be confident that morality guides your reasoning towards substantive justice.

This study proposes an Integrated Judicial Reasoning Model for Juvenile Criminal Cases (IJRM-JJ) based on these three foundations as an ideal reconstruction of the pattern of legal reasoning adopted by judges of the Shari'ah Court in criminal cases involving children. This model is constructed by combining the Theory of Judicial Reasoning as the structure or framework for judicial reasoning, the Theory of Child Protection as the orientation for safeguarding children's rights (child

care), and Maqāṣid al-Syarī'ah as the philosophical basis for realizing the public interest (maslahah). This integration demonstrates that ideal legal reasoning is increasingly not built upon the dominance of a single element, but rather on a balance between legality, child protection, and the objectives of Sharia—within a coherent chain of reasoning. This concept also expands upon previous studies which appear to have examined criminal law, the Juvenile Criminal Justice System, or the maqāṣid separately, rather than as an integrated process of judicial reasoning [39], [41], [44]. Thus, the IJRM-JJ provides a more holistic way of conceptualizing judges' legal reasoning in juvenile criminal cases.

At the operational level, the IJRM-JJ outlines how judges justify a legal decision through a sequence of interconnected beliefs. The initial step is to identify and harmonize legal norms using legal reasoning to ensure compliance with the Qanun Jinayat, the Child Criminal Justice System Act, and other relevant regulations. The next stage focuses on a comprehensive evaluation of the child's individual characteristics by analyzing their psychological condition, social and family environment, and potential for rehabilitation as an operationalization of the Theory of Child Protection. Subsequently, all alternative considerations are examined in relation to the values of maqāṣid al-syarī'ah, specifically ḥifẓ al-nafs, ḥifẓ al-'aql, and ḥifẓ al-nasl, whilst ensuring that the final decision not only meets formal legal requirements but also benefits the child and guarantees the protection of the child's rights. This framework is cohesive and follows a coherent legal mode of argumentation as outlined by MacCormick, a child-centered system as described by Freeman. The maqāṣid organized through a systems-based lens identified in the work of Jasser Auda, thereby producing a model of reasoning that provides depth, context and practical application for the adjudication of criminal cases.

Although the integration potential is considerable, the proposed IJRM-JJ model is set in the context of legal pluralism, where conflict can arise between the aims of Islamic criminal law and modern children's protection concepts. An analysis of judicial reasoning identifies at least three concrete problems. The first concerns the need to reconcile the punitive nature of some articles in the Qanun Jinayat with the restorative approach of the Juvenile Criminal Justice System (SPPA). The second issue is that judges often struggle to balance public interests and moral order with the child's best interests. Sometimes what is socially acceptable does not effectively ensure the child's healthy psychological development and prospects. Third, legal pluralism creates discretion in how national law, Islamic law, and child protection issues are considered. The outcome of such consideration may be different in similar cases.

The IJRM-JJ framework does not resolve this problem, but it explains to all involved how these objectives are balanced. Hence, the framework's significance lies in providing reasoning about legal pluralism.

In contrast to potential trends in previous research, this study offers another conceptual contribution, namely the IJRM-JJ Model (Integrated Judicial Reasoning Model for Juvenile Jinayat), which highlights a unique interconnection. Several preliminary studies have primarily addressed the implementation of the Qanun Jinayat, the application of the Juvenile Criminal Justice System, or the effectiveness of child protection as separate issues, without elaborating on the systemic interactions amongst all these elements in shaping a judge's legal reasoning in Jinayat cases involving children [8], [12], [13], [17], [22]. In contrast, the model developed in this study constitutes an integrated framework of argumentation that brings these elements together within a coherent structure linking the Theory of Judicial Reasoning and the Theory of Child Protection with the of Maqāṣid al-Syarī'ah. Coherence, legal justification—the basis of Neil MacCormick's system of Ronald Dworkin's constructive interpretation of maqāṣid [18], [41]—Jasser Auda's conception of the purposes of law as a holistic system. Thus, the IJRM-JJ not only reconstructs the conceptual thought patterns of judges, but also serves as an analytical framework for assessing how consistent they are and—to the extent this concept is applicable—for evaluating several judgments of the Supreme Court of India as well as the fundamental quality of judicial reasoning to in concerning juvenile criminal cases.

This community-based research has confirmed that the Integrated Judicial Reasoning Model for Jinayat (IJRM-JJ) has both theoretical and practical significance for the development of Jinayat law and the juvenile criminal justice system in Aceh. Theoretically, this model builds upon the Judicial Reasoning Theory, which has been developed and previously tested to demonstrate that a judge's legal reasoning in juvenile cases is simultaneously grounded in normative legality, the individual characteristics of the child, the child protection paradigm, and the substantive objectives of maqāṣid al-syarī'ah. From a practical perspective, this model can serve as a foundational framework for judges of the Shari'ah Courts in formulating judgements that are fairer, more proportionate, and focused on the best interests of the child, without disregarding the objectives of punishment under criminal law. These implications are also consistent with developments in juvenile justice, which emphasise a balance between legal certainty, rehabilitation, and the child's right to protection, as outlined in recent studies [1], [4], [15], [44]. The IJRM-JJ is not merely a conceptual finding of this research; it also has the potential to serve as a reference in policy formulation, judicial practice, and the development of academic studies on Islamic criminal law that place greater emphasis on child protection.

CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrate that the courts use four interconnected dimensions of reasoning when considering cases involving juvenile Jinayat. In other words, judicial reasoning can be classified according to the following dimensions: legal and normative concerns, individual assessment of the child, child protection perspective, and maqāṣid-oriented justification. Thus, judicial reasoning shows a regularity that cannot be called fortuitous. On the contrary, judicial reasoning demonstrates a systematic approach that enables judges to consider issues such as legal certainty, child protection, and the maqāṣid of Islamic law.

The legal considerations of judges at the Shari'ah Court in criminal cases involving children, as demonstrated in this study,

are based on four patterns: (1) The Emergence of a Legal-Normative Pattern, (2) Individual Assessment of the Child, (3) Child Protection Orientation, and (4) a Maqāṣid-based judicial pattern that determines the formation of judicial reasoning in cases involving children as a result. These patterns are internally influenced by the interaction of normative factors, the child's personal circumstances, the child protection paradigm, and the maqāṣid al-sharī'ah; therefore, the process of legal reasoning cannot be based solely on the textual application of norms, but rather becomes an argument that takes into account legal certainty, the protection of children's rights, and the substantive objectives (maqāṣid) of Sharia. Based on these findings, the Integrated Judicial Reasoning Model for Juvenile Jinayat (IJRM-JJ) is proposed as an ideal reconstruction of the pattern of legal reasoning amongst judges in Shari'ah Courts by integrating the Theory of Judicial Reasoning, the Theory of Child Protection, and Maqāṣid al-Sharia into a single coherent and systematic framework for considering legal actions based on the best interests of the child.

These findings open up the field of criminal law and the juvenile justice system for further study by shifting the focus of analysis from its implementation by state agents to how judges construct legal reasoning as the center of judicial practice. Theoretically, this model provides insights to advance the study of judicial reasoning within the context of legal pluralism and Islamic criminal law; in practice, it can serve as an argumentative framework for Shari'ah Court judges to formulate more consistent, balanced and child-centered decisions. To date, this research has focused solely on the analysis of Shari'ah Court rulings in Aceh. It has not yet empirically tested the application of the developed model in judicial practice. Therefore, future studies should examine the empirical validity of the Integrated Judicial Consideration Framework (IJCF) in courtroom practice and judicial reasoning behaviour, as well as through comparative research with child justice systems in other jurisdictions characterised by legal pluralism, so that it can be developed into a more responsive and functional model.

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