Implementation of Investigator Discretion in Determining Suspect Status for Narcotics Abusers at the Padangsidimpuan Police Department Reviewed from the Principle of Restorative Justice

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Abstract

Drug abuse in Indonesia remains a complex legal issue because it simultaneously involves criminal, health, social, and human rights protection dimensions. In law enforcement practice, investigators have strategic authority in determining the legal status of individuals suspected of drug abuse, including naming someone as a suspect based on the results of the investigation, evidence, and the investigator's professional judgment. However, in the context of drug abusers who, under certain conditions, are also positioned as victims of dependency, investigators' discretionary authority is crucial to ensure that law enforcement is not solely repressive in nature, but still considers a rehabilitative approach and the principles of restorative justice. At the Padangsidimpuan Police, the implementation of investigators' discretion in determining the suspect status of drug abusers faces challenges in the form of differing interpretations of the abuser category, limited objective parameters in determining eligibility for rehabilitation, and the need to balance the interests of law enforcement with the protection of victims of drug abuse. This study aims to analyze the implementation of investigators' authority in determining suspect status for drug abusers at the Padangsidimpuan Police and examine the application of the principle of restorative justice in the process of determining suspect status for drug abusers. The research method used is a mixed method legal research through a normative juridical and empirical juridical approach by examining narcotics regulations, police discretionary policies, restorative justice principles, and the implementation practices of investigations at the Padangsidimpuan Police. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen investigator discretionary guidelines, harmonize institutional policies, and strengthen the rehabilitative approach based on restorative justice in order to realize narcotics law enforcement that is more proportional, just, and oriented towards social recovery.

Keywords: *Investigator Discretion; Drug Abuse; Suspect Status; Restorative Justice; Padangsidimpuan Police.*

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Introduction

Drug abuse in Indonesia is a multidimensional problem that is not only related to criminal aspects, but also concerns public health, social stability, human rights protection, and the effectiveness of national criminal law policies. The phenomenon of drug abuse shows a complex development because on the one hand, the state is obliged to enforce the law against the illicit trafficking and abuse of narcotics, but on the other hand, there is a need to provide legal protection for drug abusers who, under certain conditions, are positioned as victims of dependence and require medical and social rehabilitation. This complexity means that the approach to drug law enforcement can no longer be understood solely in a repressive manner, but must consider the principles of proportionality, benefit, and substantive justice in the law enforcement process, particularly at the investigative stage that determines a person's legal status in a narcotics case.[1]

In the criminal justice system, investigators hold a strategic position as the initial actors who determine the direction of case handling through investigation, inquiry, evidence collection, and suspect determination. In the context of narcotics crimes, this authority becomes increasingly important because the investigator's decision to name someone a suspect will affect access to rehabilitation mechanisms, the implementation of restorative justice approaches, and the orientation of case resolution within the criminal justice system. Therefore, the use of investigator discretion is crucial in ensuring that the law enforcement process does not stop at a purely legalistic approach, but rather takes into account the factual circumstances of the perpetrator, the level of involvement, the purpose of punishment, and the principle of protection for victims of drug abuse.[2]

Normatively, Law Number 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics provides space for a rehabilitative approach through provisions regarding medical and social rehabilitation for drug addicts and abusers. Furthermore, police discretionary authority is also legally legitimized through Law Number 2 of 2002 concerning the Indonesian National Police, which allows police officers to act according to their own judgment in certain circumstances for the public interest and the effectiveness of law enforcement. In the development of police policy, this approach is strengthened through Regulation of the Indonesian National Police Number 8 of 2021 concerning Handling of Criminal Acts Based on Restorative Justice, which places the principles of restoration, balancing interests, and more equitable resolution as part of modern police law enforcement policy.[3]

However, the implementation of investigators' discretion in determining suspect status for drug abusers still faces normative and implementation issues. In practice, investigators are often faced with a dilemma between carrying out the repressive function of eradicating narcotics and the need to implement a rehabilitative approach based on restorative justice. It is not uncommon to find situations where drug abusers have ambiguous characteristics between perpetrators of criminal acts and victims of addiction, so that the process of determining suspect status is heavily influenced by investigators' interpretation of evidence, assessment results, the amount of evidence, patterns of use, and the level of involvement of an individual in a drug abuse network. This situation makes investigators' discretion a very decisive area and opens up the possibility of policy disparities in handling narcotics cases.[4]

This issue becomes even more relevant when linked to the restorative justice paradigm developing within the Indonesian criminal justice system. Restorative justice essentially aims to create case resolutions that emphasize not only punishment but also restoration of the situation, rehabilitation of the perpetrator, and mitigation of the social impact of the crime. In the context of drug abuse, this approach is crucial because drug abusers, under certain circumstances, are victims of substance abuse who require health care and rehabilitation rather than imprisonment. However, the implementation of restorative justice principles still faces challenges such as a lack of uniform understanding among law enforcement officials, limited

objective parameters for implementing rehabilitation, and differing interpretations regarding the scope of investigators' discretion in determining suspect status.[5]

In empirical practice at the Padangsidimpuan Police Department, the handling of drug abuse cases demonstrates a dynamic that demonstrates the need for balance between legal certainty, eradication of drug crimes, and protection for individuals in need of rehabilitation. Investigators are not only faced with the need to prove criminal acts, but also must consider the psychological condition, level of dependency, social factors, and opportunities for recovery of drug abusers. It is at this point that discretionary authority becomes a crucial instrument in determining whether an individual is positioned predominantly as a criminal or as an individual in need of a socially-based rehabilitative approach.[6]

From the perspective of administrative discretion theory and legal purpose theory, investigators' authority cannot be understood as absolute freedom, but rather as professional action that must be carried out based on the principles of legality, rationality, proportionality, and justice. Discretion exercised without clear parameters has the potential to create legal uncertainty, disparities in treatment of similar cases, and even the risk of excessive criminalization of drug abusers. Conversely, discretion exercised appropriately allows for a balance between the objectives of law enforcement, the protection of individual rights, and the effectiveness of rehabilitation as part of a more humane, modern penal system.[7]

Based on these conditions, the author argues that the main problem in the implementation of determining suspect status for drug abusers lies not solely in the lack of regulations, but in the practice of using investigators' discretion in interpreting the space between repressive and rehabilitative approaches. Therefore, this study is important to analyze how the implementation of investigators' authority in determining suspect status for drug abusers at the Padangsidimpuan Police and how the application of the principle of restorative justice in the process of determining suspect status in order to realize a narcotics law enforcement system that is fairer, proportional, and oriented towards social recovery.[8]

Research Methodology

This study uses a mixed research method through a collaboration of normative and empirical juridical research with prescriptive-analytical characters to analyze the implementation of investigators' discretion in determining the suspect status of drug abusers at the Padangsidimpuan Police and examine the application of the principle of restorative justice in the process of determining the suspect status of drug abusers. The use of mixed methods was chosen because the issues studied are not only related to the construction of legal norms regarding investigators' authority, police discretion, drug rehabilitation, and restorative justice, but also concern the practice of implementing investigations at the regional level which is influenced by investigators' interpretations, institutional culture, evidence, assessment results, and the need to maintain a balance between legal certainty and social recovery. Normative juridical research is conducted to examine legal regulations, principles, theories, concepts, and policies for narcotics law enforcement, while empirical juridical research is used to understand the reality of the implementation of investigators' discretion at the Padangsidimpuan Police as a form of testing the practice of law in action. From a methodological perspective, the combined normative and empirical legal research approach is considered relevant because it can explain legal issues more comprehensively by integrating the regulatory dimension and social implementation practices. This approach is also used in Henry Aspan's study, which positions normative, empirical, and socio-legal legal research as important instruments for analyzing legal issues multidimensionally.[9]

The research approaches used include a statutory approach, a conceptual approach, an empirical approach, and a case approach. The statutory approach is conducted through a review of various regulations related to investigator authority, drug abuse, rehabilitation, police discretion, and restorative justice, including Law Number 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics,

Law Number 2 of 2002 concerning the Indonesian National Police, the Criminal Procedure Code, and Regulation of the Indonesian National Police Number 8 of 2021 concerning Handling of Criminal Acts Based on Restorative Justice, which serves as the normative basis for the application of the restorative approach in police law enforcement policies. The conceptual approach is used to examine the theory of discretion, the theory of restorative justice, the theory of legal objectives, the theory of rehabilitative punishment, and the concept of protecting victims of drug abuse. Meanwhile, an empirical approach was carried out through observing the implementation practices of investigators' authority at the Padangsidimpuan Police in order to obtain an overview of the pattern of determining suspect status, investigators' considerations, obstacles to implementing discretion, and the application of the principle of restorative justice in narcotics abuse cases.[10]

The data sources and legal materials in this study consist of primary legal materials, secondary legal materials, and empirical field data. Primary legal materials include all regulations relevant to the research object, including Law Number 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics, Law Number 2 of 2002 concerning the Indonesian National Police, the Criminal Procedure Code, and Regulation of the Indonesian National Police Number 8 of 2021 concerning Handling of Criminal Acts Based on Restorative Justice. Secondary legal materials were obtained through literature studies in the form of books, scientific journals, academic articles, and legal doctrines discussing investigator discretion, drug rehabilitation, the criminal justice system, and restorative justice. In the context of legal research methodology, Henry Aspan's ideas regarding the use of normative, empirical, and socio-legal research are used as a conceptual foundation for understanding the relationship between legal norms and the implementation practices of law enforcement institutions, particularly on issues involving the interpretation of the authority of law enforcement officers. Empirical data were obtained through field research at the Padangsidimpuan Police Station through interviews, observations, and documentation of the investigation practices of drug abuse cases.[11]

Data collection techniques were conducted through library research and field research. The literature study was conducted by inventorying, classifying, and analyzing laws and regulations, books, journals, research results, and legal doctrines relevant to investigator authority, police discretion, narcotics rehabilitation, and the principle of restorative justice. Field research was conducted at the Padangsidimpuan Police through interviews with investigators from the Narcotics Unit, collecting supporting documents, and observing the implementation practices of determining suspect status for drug abusers. Data analysis was conducted qualitatively through a deductive-inductive thinking pattern, namely connecting general legal norms with empirical implementation facts in the field to produce the construction of legal arguments regarding the implementation of investigator discretion and the effectiveness of the application of the principle of restorative justice in the process of determining suspect status for drug abusers. With this method, the research is directed to produce a legal analysis that is not only normative and theoretical, but also implementative in explaining the dynamics of narcotics law enforcement practices at the Padangsidimpuan
Police.[12]

Results Implementation of Investigator Authority in Determining Suspect Status for Narcotics Abusers at Padangsidimpuan Police

Law enforcement against narcotics crimes essentially places investigators as the primary actors in determining the direction of the legal process from the initial stages of the investigation, including in determining a person as a suspect. In the Indonesian criminal law system, determining suspect status is not merely an administrative action, but a form of exercise of legal authority that has serious consequences for an individual's rights, freedoms, and legal standing within the criminal justice system. Therefore, the implementation of investigators' authority regarding drug abusers must be carried out based on the principles of legality,

professionalism, proportionality, and legal accountability to avoid excessive repressive actions or legal uncertainty against individuals who substantively have the characteristics of victims of drug addiction.[13]

Normatively, the investigator's authority to determine suspect status is legitimized through the Criminal Procedure Code, which authorizes investigators to conduct investigative actions based on sufficient preliminary evidence. In the context of narcotics crimes, this authority must be read systematically alongside Law Number 35 of 2009 concerning Narcotics, which differentiates between drug dealers, distributors, couriers, addicts, and abusers. This distinction is important because not all individuals involved in narcotics cases have the same level of culpability. At this point, the investigator's authority becomes crucial, as the determination of suspect status is often influenced by interpretations of the amount of evidence, patterns of use, assessment results, intensity of dependency, and the individual's relationship to the drug distribution network.[14]

In practice at the Padangsidimpuan Police, the implementation of investigators' authority shows that the process of determining suspect status for drug abusers is carried out through several stages, namely an initial examination of the facts of the incident, gathering evidence, examining witnesses, obtaining laboratory test results, and analyzing indications of individual involvement in drug trafficking activities. However, investigators also face complex situations because in various cases, conditions are found where an individual has dual characteristics, namely being an active user but also having certain connections to smallscale drug distribution. This situation means that investigators' authority cannot be exercised mechanically, but requires professional judgment based on legal facts and social considerations.[15]

The implementation of investigators' authority becomes increasingly complex because drug abusers, under certain circumstances, are viewed as victims of substance abuse requiring medical and social rehabilitation. From a modern criminal policy perspective, punishment is no longer positioned as the sole instrument for resolving criminal cases, but must instead consider a rehabilitative orientation for specific offenders who need rehabilitation. Therefore, investigators are not only tasked with proving the elements of a crime but also with considering the objectives of social protection and rehabilitation for drug abusers to ensure that law enforcement policies do not exacerbate a person's dependency.[16]

Indonesian National Police Regulation Number 8 of 2021 concerning Handling Criminal Offenses Based on Restorative Justice essentially reinforces investigators' orientation to employ a more equitable and recovery-oriented approach. Although narcotics cases have unique characteristics and cannot all be resolved through restorative justice mechanisms, the substance of this regulation directs that the use of investigators' authority must consider legal benefits, social protection, and the effectiveness of recovery for specific individuals. In the context of drug abuse, such an approach becomes relevant when an individual is substantively more appropriately positioned as a victim of addiction than a perpetrator of drug trafficking.[17]

From a discretionary perspective, investigators' authority is essentially a form of professional action that allows officers to act according to their own judgment based on the law, facts, and public interest. Discretion does not mean absolute freedom, but rather legal action that must be subject to the principles of rationality, objectivity, and proportionality. Therefore, the implementation of discretion in determining suspect status for drug abusers requires objective parameters to avoid disparities in legal treatment for cases with similar characteristics. When these parameters are unclear, investigators' room for interpretation has the potential to result in legal uncertainty and disproportionate criminalization.[18]

Empirical research at the Padangsidimpuan Police Department shows that the implementation of investigators' authority in determining suspect status is still heavily influenced by the quality of evidence, the quantity of evidence, assessment results, drug use patterns, suspect confessions, and indications of individual involvement in drug distribution. In practice, investigators strive to maintain a balance between the need for repressive law

enforcement against drug trafficking and the need for rehabilitation for individuals deemed worthy of a recovery approach. However, the lack of fully uniform standard parameters means that the use of investigators' authority still relies on the professional interpretation of officers in reading the factual situation of the case. [19]

From the perspective of Gustav Radbruch's theory of legal objectives, the law must be able to create a balance between legal certainty (rechtssicherheit), justice (gerechtigkeit), and benefit (zweckmäßigkeit). The implementation of investigators' authority regarding drug abusers shows that these three legal objectives are often in a dilemma. Repressive law enforcement does provide legal certainty regarding the prohibition of drug abuse, but it does not necessarily produce social benefits if individuals who actually need rehabilitation are positioned dominantly as criminals. Therefore, investigators are required to be able to use their authority proportionally to create a balance between community protection, law enforcement, and social recovery for drug abusers.[20]

From a restorative justice perspective, the implementation of investigators' authority should ideally not stop at the formal act of determining a suspect, but should also consider the possibility of a more rehabilitative and restorative resolution for a particular individual. T. Riza Zarzani emphasized that the restorative justice orientation aims to establish a balance between legal protection, social recovery, and humanitarian interests by placing a restorative approach as a crucial part of the criminal case resolution system. In the context of drug abuse, this perspective demonstrates that investigators are not solely tasked with criminalizing perpetrators, but also assessing the individual's rehabilitation needs and opportunities for social reintegration into society in a more humane manner.

Based on this analysis, the implementation of investigators' authority in determining suspect status for drug abusers at the Padangsidimpuan Police Station essentially demonstrates the dynamics between repressive and rehabilitative approaches in law enforcement practices. Investigators exercise their authority based on evidence and positive legal construction, but in practice still face discretionary space to consider the characteristics of drug abusers as individuals in need of social recovery. Therefore, the effectiveness of the implementation of investigators' authority is determined not only by compliance with formal legal procedures, but also by the investigator's ability to use discretion professionally, objectively, and based on the principles of restorative justice so that the determination of suspect status does not result in excessive criminalization of drug abusers who deserve rehabilitation.[21]

From the author's synthetic perspective, the implementation of investigators' authority in determining suspect status for drug abusers at the Padangsidimpuan Police Department shows that the main problem lies not in the absence of a legal basis, but rather in the scope for interpretation in the use of discretionary authority, which does not yet have fully uniform implementation parameters. The author assesses that investigators in practice are faced with a dilemma between carrying out the repressive mandate of eradicating narcotics and the obligation to consider a rehabilitative approach for individuals who have characteristics as victims of addiction. This situation means that the determination of suspect status cannot be done mechanistically based only on the presence of evidence or the results of the initial examination, but must take into account the level of involvement, psychological condition, intensity of dependence, assessment results, and the possibility of social recovery for drug abusers. Thus, investigators' authority is ideally understood as a professional instrument based on legal reasoning that integrates legal certainty, substantive justice, and the principles of justice.

The author also argues that the future implementation of investigators' authority requires strengthening more measurable objective parameters to reduce disparities in the interpretation of discretionary action against drug abusers. These parameters can be realized through standardized assessment indicators based on assessment results, level of involvement in drug trafficking, patterns of use, conditions of dependency, and opportunities for individual social rehabilitation. Thus, investigators' discretion does not develop into a space for institutional

subjectivity, but becomes an accountable legal instrument in ensuring a balance between legal certainty, justice, and social benefit. Within this framework, the author believes that investigators function not only as law enforcement officers carrying out repressive actions, but also as strategic actors in determining the direction of social recovery for drug abusers through a more rehabilitative and restorative approach.

Implementation of the Principle of Restorative Justice in the Process of Determining Suspect Status for Narcotics Abusers at the Padangsidimpuan Police

The development of the modern criminal law paradigm indicates a shift in the orientation of law enforcement from a repressive approach to a more restorative and rehabilitative one. This shift arose from criticism of the conventional criminal justice system, which places too much emphasis on punishment (punitive justice) without considering the recovery aspect for individuals involved in certain crimes. In the context of drug abuse, this paradigm becomes increasingly relevant because drug abusers, under certain circumstances, are viewed not only as perpetrators of criminal acts but also as individuals experiencing dependence and requiring medical and social rehabilitation. Therefore, the application of the principle of restorative justice in the process of determining the suspect status of drug abusers is crucial to ensure that criminal law policies not only produce repressive effects but also provide space for social recovery and protection for victims of substance abuse.[22]

Normatively, the application of restorative justice in police law enforcement policy is legitimized through Indonesian National Police Regulation Number 8 of 2021 concerning the Handling of Criminal Acts Based on Restorative Justice, which places case resolution through a restorative approach as part of a modern law enforcement strategy. Although narcotics crimes are unique due to their relationship to the national criminal policy on narcotics eradication, restorative principles remain relevant to certain categories of drug abusers who predominantly display characteristics of victims of addiction rather than members of illicit trafficking networks. From this perspective, investigators are required not only to carry out formal law enforcement functions but also to consider the principles of benefit, rehabilitation, and social reintegration in the process of determining an individual's legal status.[23]

In practice at the Padangsidimpuan Police Department, the application of restorative justice principles in the process of determining suspect status for drug abusers is carried out through consideration of the individual perpetrator's condition, assessment results, the amount of evidence, patterns of drug use, and the level of involvement in distribution or trafficking activities. Investigators in the initial stage generally identify whether the individual has a tendency to be an active user with a certain level of dependence or whether there are indications of further involvement as an intermediary or part of a distribution network. In this context, the principle of restorative justice is not interpreted as an elimination of legal responsibility, but rather as a proportional evaluation mechanism to determine whether a rehabilitative approach is more appropriate than a repressive punitive approach.[24]

The application of restorative justice principles is also reflected in the use of assessment results as a crucial instrument in supporting investigators' decisions regarding the legal status of drug abusers. Assessment results are not merely understood as administrative documents, but serve as a basis for assessing a person's medical, psychological, and social conditions, as well as their level of drug dependence. In certain situations, assessments provide objective arguments that a person is more deserving of rehabilitation rather than criminal proceedings, which emphasize punishment. Therefore, the process of determining suspect status does not stop at proving the elements of the crime but also considers the individual's need for recovery and protection of the perpetrator's social future.[25]

From the perspective of restorative justice theory, the primary focus of case resolution is not merely retaliation against the perpetrator, but rather restitution of social losses, rehabilitation, and reintegration into society. T. Riza Zarzani emphasized that restorative justice must be understood as an approach that balances legal protection, the interests of victims, and

the social rehabilitation of perpetrators as an integral part of the modern criminal justice system. When linked to drug abuse, this approach demonstrates that determining suspect status should not be an automatic instrument of criminalization, but rather should be positioned as a legal evaluation space that considers individual conditions and opportunities for recovery through a rehabilitative approach.[26]

However, the implementation of restorative justice principles for drug abusers at the Padangsidimpuan Police Department still faces several obstacles. One major issue is the lack of uniform objective parameters for determining who is eligible for a restorative approach at the suspect determination stage. In practice, investigators often encounter ambiguous situations where someone is a user but also finds certain indications of a connection to smallscale drug distribution. This situation opens up wide room for interpretation, so decisions regarding the application of restorative justice are still heavily influenced by the investigator's professional skills, experience, and perspective in interpreting the characteristics of the case.[27]

Beyond parameter issues, another challenge lies in a legal culture that still predominantly positions narcotics law enforcement from a repressive perspective. In institutional practice, the punitive approach is still often understood as a symbol of successful drug eradication, thus, restorative justice-based rehabilitation approaches have yet to fully gain optimal implementation space. However, for certain drug users with high levels of dependence and not involved in drug trafficking networks, a recovery orientation is more relevant in reducing the risk of reoffending and improving the quality of the perpetrator's social reintegration into society.[28]

Empirical research at the Padangsidimpuan Police Department shows that investigators have, in principle, attempted to implement the principles of restorative justice through a more selective and individualized approach to drug abusers. However, the effectiveness of this implementation is still influenced by limited rehabilitation facilities, disharmonious coordination between agencies, differing interpretations of assessment results, and the lack of optimal implementation guidelines specific to drug abuse cases. As a result, the restorative approach to suspect determination remains a case-by-case basis and has not yet been fully standardized in investigative practice.[29]

From the perspective of Gustav Radbruch's theory of legal objectives, the application of restorative justice principles to drug abusers is essentially an effort to maintain a balance between legal certainty, justice, and expediency. Determining suspect status that places too much emphasis on formal legal certainty has the potential to neglect the need for individual rehabilitation, while an overly lenient approach without clear legal parameters can undermine the legitimacy of law enforcement itself. Therefore, the application of restorative justice principles must be placed in a proportional position while still ensuring community protection, perpetrator rehabilitation, and measurable legal certainty.[30]

From the author's synthetic perspective, the application of the principle of restorative justice in the process of determining suspect status for drug abusers at the Padangsidimpuan Police should be directed towards the development of a recovery-based legal assessment model. This model positions investigators not merely as executors of repressive actions, but as strategic actors who have the ability to interpret the relationship between the level of culpability, rehabilitation needs, and opportunities for an individual's social reintegration. Thus, determining suspect status is no longer understood as the end of the legalization process of punishment, but as the initial stage in determining a more proportional and just form of legal settlement for drug abusers.[31]

The author also argues that the effective application of restorative justice principles during the investigation stage requires strengthening more objective and measurable implementation standards, including through harmonization of assessment parameters, strengthening inter-agency coordination, and optimizing Police Regulation No. 8 of 2021 as the basis for restorative policies within the police force. Without clear implementation standards, investigators'

discretion has the potential to create policy disparities and legal uncertainty in cases with similar characteristics. Therefore, a restorative approach to drug abuse must be positioned as an instrument for law enforcement policy reform aimed at balancing legal certainty, community protection, and the need for social rehabilitation in a more humane manner.[32]

Conclusion

Based on the description of the implementation of investigators' authority in determining the suspect status of drug abusers at the Padangsidimpuan Police, it can be concluded that investigators' authority holds a strategic position in determining the direction of drug case resolution because it is not only related to proving criminal elements, but also determines individual access to a more proportional rehabilitative approach and legal protection. The implementation of this authority in practice is carried out through the examination of evidence, assessment results, conditions of dependency, the amount of evidence, and the level of a person's involvement in drug trafficking activities. However, the process of determining suspect status still faces dynamics in the form of room for interpretation of investigators' discretion that does not yet have fully objective and uniform parameters, so that legal decisions are often influenced by the investigator's professional assessment of the factual characteristics of the case. In this context, the effectiveness of the implementation of investigators' authority is not only determined by compliance with formal procedures, but also by the investigator's ability to balance the principles of legal certainty, justice, and social benefit so that drug abusers who have characteristics as victims of dependency do not experience excessive criminalization, but rather have the opportunity for recovery through a more humane rehabilitative approach.

Meanwhile, the application of restorative justice principles in the suspect determination process for drug abusers at the Padangsidimpuan Police Department demonstrates a paradigm shift in law enforcement from a repressive approach to a more rehabilitative and restorative one through the utilization of assessment results, consideration of the individual circumstances of the perpetrator, and an emphasis on social recovery. Although Indonesian National Police Regulation Number 8 of 2021 provides a normative basis for the application of restorative justice, its implementation still faces obstacles in the form of a lack of uniform application parameters, limited rehabilitation facilities, disharmonious inter-agency coordination, and a dominant legal culture that still tends to be repressive in drug cases. Therefore, the application of restorative justice principles needs to be strengthened through standardization of assessment indicators, harmonization of assessment mechanisms, and strengthening the professionalism of investigators so that the suspect determination process not only ensures legal certainty but also creates substantive justice and social benefits through more proportional and rehabilitation-oriented rehabilitation for drug abusers.

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