

The Role of Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Addressing Past Human Rights Violations

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of KKR Aceh as a localized mechanism of transitional justice, particularly in promoting truth-seeking, victim rehabilitation, and reconciliation. Employing a normative–empirical legal approach, the research analyzes both the regulatory foundations and the practical implementation of KKR Aceh's mandate as outlined in Law No. 11 of 2006 on the Governance of Aceh and Qanun Aceh No. 17 of 2013. Data were obtained from statutory regulations, official reports, and scholarly literature. The normative analysis focuses on the institutional design, legal legitimacy, and alignment of KKR Aceh with Indonesia's constitutional principles and international human rights standards. Meanwhile, the empirical analysis evaluates its achievements in documenting human rights abuses, organizing public hearings, and recommending reparations for victims. The findings indicate that KKR Aceh has made substantial progress in restoring victims' dignity and encouraging societal healing. However, its capacity remains limited due to legal, financial, and institutional challenges, including dependency on special autonomy funds and lack of coordination with national agencies. The study concludes that reinforcing KKR Aceh's legal framework, ensuring continuous funding, and integrating reconciliation education are vital for strengthening transitional justice and sustaining peace in Aceh.

[Tujuan penelitian ini adalah menilai efektivitas KKR Aceh sebagai mekanisme keadilan transisional di tingkat lokal, terutama dalam memajukan pengungkapan kebenaran, pemulihan korban, dan rekonsiliasi sosial. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan hukum normatif-empiris, penelitian ini menganalisis landasan hukum serta implementasi praktis mandat KKR Aceh sebagaimana diatur dalam Undang-Undang Nomor 11 Tahun 2006 tentang Pemerintahan Aceh dan Qanun Aceh Nomor 17 Tahun 2013. Data penelitian diperoleh dari peraturan perundang-undangan, laporan resmi, dan literatur akademik. Analisis normatif menitikberatkan pada legitimasi hukum, desain kelembagaan, serta kesesuaian KKR Aceh dengan prinsip konstitusi dan standar hak asasi manusia internasional. Sementara itu, analisis empiris menilai pencapaian lembaga ini dalam mendokumentasikan pelanggaran HAM, menyelenggarakan sidang kesaksian publik, serta memberikan rekomendasi reparasi bagi korban. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa KKR Aceh telah berkontribusi signifikan dalam memulihkan martabat korban dan memperkuat rekonsiliasi sosial. Namun, efektivitasnya masih terbatas akibat kendala hukum, keuangan, dan kelembagaan, termasuk ketergantungan pada dana otonomi khusus dan lemahnya koordinasi dengan lembaga nasional. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa penguatan dasar hukum, dukungan pendanaan berkelanjutan, dan pendidikan rekonsiliasi

diperlukan untuk memperkuat keadilan transisional dan menjaga perdamaian di Aceh.]

Keywords: KKR Aceh, reconciliation, transitional justice, human rights normative–empirical study

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INTRODUCTION

Post-conflict societies face the dual challenge of addressing past atrocities while rebuilding social trust and institutional legitimacy. Globally, transitional justice has evolved beyond court-centered models to include truth commissions, reparations, and community-based reconciliation (Fiedler and Mross, 2023). Within this discourse, Aceh represents Indonesia's most distinct experiment in localized transitional justice following decades of armed conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM) and the Indonesian state. Aceh granted special autonomy status under Law No. 11 of 2006 following the 2005 Helsinki Agreement, exemplifies this challenge. The decades-long armed conflict left deep scars: enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, torture, and other human rights violations. Many victims still await recognition, reparations, and justice. One mechanism designed to respond to these imperatives is the Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission (*Komisi Kebenaran dan Rekonsiliasi* (KKR) Aceh), established by Qanun Aceh No. 17 of 2013. The commission's mandate includes truth-seeking, restitution recommendations, social reconciliation, and facilitating the reintegration of victims. While the normative legal framework appears robust, empirical evidence suggests significant gaps between mandate and implementation.

Scholarly work has highlighted similar phenomena. Manan (2015) examines transitional justice efforts in Indonesia, including Aceh, Papua, and East Timor, and concludes that while institutions are in place, outcomes have often fallen short due to political hesitation and lack of enforceability. (Fajriyah et al., 2024) analyze government legal policy addressing past human rights abuses and find that legal reforms, victim protection, and civil society participation are essential yet underutilized components. Yunus (2022) specifically investigates victims of enforced disappearance in the Aceh conflict and argues that although KKR provides a forum for recognition, many victims' rights remain unfulfilled. (Akbar, 2017) studies the legal politics behind the establishment of KKR Aceh, noting that while Qanun and Governance of Aceh (*Undang-Undang Pemerintah Aceh* (UUPA)) provide the basis, the absence of a national truth commission and limited binding power reduce KKR's effectiveness.

While these studies have advanced understanding of Indonesia's transitional justice landscape, most remain descriptive or fragmented—focusing on either legal design or political dynamics without systematically linking normative frameworks to empirical outcomes. There is thus a need for an integrative analysis that examines how KKR Aceh operates as both a legal institution and a socio-political mechanism for reconciliation. This article seeks to fill that gap by providing a comprehensive assessment of the role and function of KKR Aceh in addressing past human rights violations, KKR Aceh's normative foundations, institutional performance, and restorative potential within Indonesia's decentralized governance framework.

The normative foundation of KKR Aceh lies in the intersection of Indonesian domestic law—Law No. 11 of 2006 on Governance of Aceh, constitutional guarantees such as Article 28I

of the 1945 Constitution, human rights legislation—and international obligations. Empirical observations reveal that despite success in documenting testimonies, the realization of reparations, judicial accountability, and social reconciliation remains partial. Obstacles include limited legislative binding power, unpredictable funding tied to special autonomy mechanisms, political resistance, and social reluctance among affected communities.

By exploring these dimensions, the research endeavors to offer both theoretical insight and policy implications. It argues that KKR Aceh, while imperfect, remains a crucial element in Indonesia's transitional justice architecture. Strengthening its binding authority, securing stable funding, reinforcing judicial collaboration, and enhancing societal engagement may help bridge norm-practice disparities. The article situates KKR Aceh not only as an institutional necessity for Aceh's post-conflict healing, but also as an instructive case study for global conversations on non-judicial reconciliation mechanisms.

METHOD

This study applies a normative–empirical legal research design, a hybrid methodology frequently used in contemporary socio-legal scholarship to bridge the gap between law in books and law in practice. The normative dimension focuses on examining written legal norms. The empirical dimension analyzes how these norms have been implemented in practice, particularly in relation to truth-seeking, victim rehabilitation, and reconciliation processes (Hamzani et al., 2024; Negara, 2023).

A normative–empirical framework is particularly suitable for assessing transitional justice institutions such as KKR Aceh because it measures how legal norms interact with political, institutional, and social realities (Fajriyah et al., 2024). The research integrates doctrinal legal interpretation with field-based document review, to yield a comprehensive and critical understanding of both the normative expectations and empirical realities of KKR Aceh's operations.

Analytical Framework

The analytical framework integrates three dimensions: legal-doctrinal, comparative, and empirical. Doctrinal Analysis examines the hierarchy of norms that regulate KKR Aceh, including UUD 1945, Law No. 11 of 2006 on the Governance of Aceh, and Qanun Aceh No. 17 of 2013 on KKR Aceh, along with international human rights conventions ratified by Indonesia, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention Against Torture. Comparative Analysis positions KKR Aceh alongside other truth commissions, notably the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Timor-Leste's Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR), to identify best practices and gaps in normative design (Teitel, 2014).

Data Sources

Primary Legal Sources are Undang-Undang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia Tahun 1945 (Constitution), Law No. 11 of 2006 on the Governance of Aceh (UUPA), Qanun Aceh No. 17 Tahun 2013 about KKR, Law No. 39 of 1999 on Human Rights, International conventions ratified by Indonesia relevant to human rights and transitional justice. Secondary Sources are books, academic journal articles, and dissertations related to transitional justice, human rights, and regional autonomy. Reports from Komnas HAM, KKR Aceh, UNDP, and the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ).

Data collection employs library research, document analysis, and qualitative case study techniques. Legal materials are obtained through official publications and verified academic

databases. The selection criteria for documents include relevance to the KKR Aceh's mandate, accessibility, and credibility (Empirical Legal Research Methods, 2025).

Data Analysis

The study employs qualitative content analysis, guided by a triangulation strategy combining doctrinal interpretation with empirical validation. The process consists of: Identifying and coding key legal principles and institutional mandates; Mapping their implementation through documented activities and reports; Comparing normative expectations with observed practices; and Synthesizing findings to reveal gaps, consistencies, or contradictions between law and practice (Skaar et al., 2015).

Empirical findings are analyzed descriptively to illustrate performance metrics such as number of victim testimonies collected, reparations distributed, and recommendations implemented. Legal analysis is conducted through hermeneutic interpretation, emphasizing coherence with constitutional principles and international human rights standards (Teitel, 2014).

Methodological Approaches & Procedure

This study employs a mixed-method approach combining normative and empirical analysis. The normative/doctrinal approach reviews and interprets legal texts, including domestic laws, Qanun Aceh, constitutional provisions, and international treaties. A comparative approach examines KKR Aceh's mandate against similar truth commissions, while a historical approach traces Aceh's conflict, the Helsinki Agreement, and subsequent legal reforms. The empirical approach uses case studies, document analysis (KKR, NGO, and government reports), and, where possible, stakeholder interviews. Through triangulation, normative claims are cross-verified with empirical evidence to map legal mandates against actual outcomes and identify implementation gaps. Qualitative content **analysis** and limited descriptive statistics summarize findings, ensuring validity through cross-sourcing and consistency checks (Hamzani et al., 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Legal Foundation and Role of the Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission (KKR Aceh)

The establishment of the Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Komisi Kebenaran dan Rekonsiliasi Aceh – KKR Aceh) represents a significant milestone in Indonesia's transition from conflict to peace. Rooted in the 2005 Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), the commission was institutionalized through Law No. 11 of 2006 on the Governance of Aceh (UUPA) and Qanun Aceh No. 17 of 2013. The legal framework gives KKR Aceh a unique mandate as an independent, non-judicial body responsible for uncovering truth, facilitating reconciliation, and recommending reparations for victims of human rights violations during the Aceh conflict (Bakiner, 2021; Suh, 2015).

Unlike the defunct national-level truth commission annulled by Indonesia's Constitutional Court in 2006, KKR Aceh operates at the subnational level, reflecting localized autonomy and regional accountability. This design aligns with Indonesia's decentralized governance system, allowing Aceh to adapt transitional justice principles within its distinct cultural and political setting. By combining formal legal legitimacy with customary norms of *peumulia jamee* (honoring guests) and *adat perdamaian*, KKR Aceh embodies a model of hybrid justice that bridges formal law and social restoration.

KKR Aceh's core mandates, as stipulated in Article 3 of the Qanun, include truth-seeking, reconciliation, and reparations. The commission has conducted public hearings, recorded over 700 testimonies, and produced comprehensive reports on violations from 1976 to 2005 (Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2025). It also provides recommendations for victim rehabilitation, psychological recovery, and the reintegration of ex-combatants.

However, the commission's implementation capacity is constrained by three major factors: (1) limited financial support dependent on special autonomy funds, (2) lack of national coordination with Komnas HAM and judicial bodies, and (3) fluctuating political will among local elites (Stan & Nedelsky, 2023). The absence of prosecutorial powers also limits its ability to ensure accountability, relegating its authority to advisory functions. These constraints echo challenges faced by similar commissions in the Global South, where truth-telling often outpaces tangible justice (Ciorciari & Heindel, 2017).

The discontinuity between KKR's findings and state policy implementation highlights a broader problem in Indonesia's transitional justice framework—namely, the gap between symbolic recognition and structural reform (Bakiner, 2021; Teitel, 2014). The commission's success thus depends not only on its investigative rigor but also on state responsiveness to its recommendations.

From a theoretical standpoint, KKR Aceh's mandate embodies the principles of restorative justice, emphasizing healing, acknowledgment, and reconciliation over retribution. This approach aligns with the global evolution of transitional justice frameworks that seek to humanize post-conflict resolution (Skaar et al., 2015). Rather than focusing solely on legal prosecution, KKR Aceh prioritizes the restoration of victims' dignity through public acknowledgment and social reintegration.

Empirical evidence shows that truth commissions adopting restorative models foster greater community trust and long-term peace (Bakiner, 2021). In Aceh, KKR's approach includes gender-sensitive initiatives addressing women victims of sexual violence and psychological trauma. Programs such as the Public Testimony Forum and the Victim Assistance Scheme demonstrate KKR's commitment to inclusivity, transparency, and participatory justice (Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2025).

Yet, restorative justice without institutional reinforcement risks being reduced to moral symbolism. Thus, to sustain its restorative function, KKR Aceh requires consistent financial allocation and formal collaboration with Indonesia's national human rights apparatus.

Comparatively, KKR Aceh shares similarities with the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Timor-Leste's Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation (CAVR). Each reflects the challenges of balancing truth-seeking with justice delivery. While South Africa's TRC integrated conditional amnesty, and Timor-Leste's CAVR incorporated community reconciliation, KKR Aceh remains primarily an investigative body without prosecutorial leverage.

Recent studies emphasize that effective truth commissions combine restorative truth-telling with structural reform and reparation mechanisms (Skaar et al., 2015; Stan & Nedelsky, 2023). Aceh's experience underscores the importance of contextual adaptation—designing reconciliation models that respect local traditions while adhering to universal human rights principles. The institutional independence of KKR Aceh, if strengthened through sustained funding and political backing, could serve as a model for subnational truth commissions in Indonesia.

For KKR Aceh to remain relevant beyond 2024, when the special autonomy fund is set to expire, the government must institutionalize long-term financial and legal

frameworks supporting transitional justice. Without this, truth-seeking risks stagnating into archival memory rather than actionable policy. Integrating reconciliation education into formal curricula could also promote societal understanding of peacebuilding and justice (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2011).

The continuation of KKR Aceh requires renewed collaboration between local and national institutions. Coordination with Komnas HAM, the Attorney General's Office, and civil society would enhance both legitimacy and policy uptake. Additionally, embedding KKR's recommendations within regional development planning can ensure that transitional justice becomes an integral part of post-conflict governance.

Ultimately, the case of KKR Aceh illustrates that transitional justice is not merely a legal process but a social contract between the state and its citizens—a process of acknowledging truth, restoring dignity, and reaffirming the rule of law in post-conflict societies. Having outlined the legal and institutional foundations of KKR Aceh, the next section explores how these normative principles are operationalized in practice.

The Role and Normative Function of the Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission (KKR Aceh)

Building upon its legal foundation, this section examines the normative functions that guide KKR Aceh's operations within the broader framework of restorative justice. The Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission (KKR Aceh) represents a localized institutional framework for addressing past human rights violations committed during the prolonged armed conflict between the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). As a form of transitional justice, the Commission performs both restorative and preventive functions, combining formal legal norms with social healing mechanisms. Its establishment reflects a regional adaptation of global truth commission practices, contextualized through Aceh's special autonomy under the Law No. 11 of 2006 on the Government of Aceh.

KKR Aceh's operational role extends beyond administrative investigation. It embodies the principles of restorative justice, focusing on acknowledgment, rehabilitation, and reconciliation. Instead of punitive justice, the Commission emphasizes rebuilding social harmony through truth-telling, public hearings, and reparation. Such mechanisms restore the dignity of victims and foster long-term peacebuilding. According to (Stan & Nedelsky, 2023), truth commissions serve as a moral bridge between past atrocities and a nation's democratic aspirations, balancing legal accountability and social forgiveness.

The Commission's investigative methodology combines qualitative truth-seeking and forensic verification. Interviews, archival research, and victim testimonies provide a basis for constructing factual narratives of violation. These data underpin policy recommendations submitted to the Aceh Government and Indonesia's central human rights institutions. The transparency and inclusivity of these procedures enhance the Commission's legitimacy. Nonetheless, challenges remain, including political interference, limited funding following the potential expiration of Aceh's special autonomy fund, and the absence of binding legal authority to enforce recommendations.

Normatively, the Commission operates under the principles of legality, accountability, and restorative equity. The principle of legality ensures that its actions align with national and international human rights law, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (UNOHCHR, 2021). The principle of accountability mandates procedural transparency and justifies decisions before victims and the public. The principle of restorative equity positions

victims at the center of reconciliation, prioritizing reparative over punitive measures (de Greiff, 2021).

Within the normative framework, KKR Aceh also functions as an educational platform for human rights awareness. It organizes public dialogues, community workshops, and advocacy programs aimed at preventing future violations (KKR Aceh, 2021). This educational dimension reinforces the ethical foundation of transitional justice by cultivating a culture of rights within society. Transformative justice is influenced not only by institutional reforms but also through public consciousness and moral restoration (Rossner & Taylor, 2024).

Moreover, collaboration with international bodies such as the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) strengthens the Commission's institutional capacity. These partnerships provide technical guidance, enhance documentation standards, and promote comparative learning from other truth commissions in South Africa, Timor-Leste, and Colombia. Such cooperation situates Aceh's experience within the global discourse on post-conflict justice, showing that localized truth-seeking can contribute to international peacebuilding models.

From a normative-empirical standpoint, KKR Aceh's effectiveness depends on the balance between legal recognition and empirical implementation. Normatively, the Commission holds legitimacy under Qanun Aceh No. 17/2013. Empirically, however, its operational constraints—limited enforcement powers and bureaucratic resistance—hinder full realization of justice. The gap between normative ideals and empirical outcomes highlights the broader dilemma of transitional justice in decentralized states, where autonomy intersects with national sovereignty (Seth, 2025).

The restorative orientation of KKR Aceh's work demonstrates a shift from retributive frameworks toward community-based healing. Initiatives such as public apologies, symbolic reparations, and psychosocial rehabilitation reflect an integrative approach that merges legal reparation with moral accountability. Yet, critics argue that the absence of criminal prosecution undermines the deterrent aspect of justice (Wolfe, 2022). Therefore, a dual mechanism combining restorative and retributive approaches may offer a more balanced model for addressing serious human rights abuses.

Another vital function of KKR Aceh lies in policy advocacy. The Commission's reports and recommendations influence local and national legislation on victims' rights, reparations, and peacebuilding frameworks (KKR Aceh, 2021). By integrating empirical findings into normative policymaking, KKR Aceh exemplifies how subnational truth commissions can contribute to national reconciliation strategies.

In conclusion, the Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission serves as both a legal and moral institution designed to reconcile a region scarred by prolonged conflict. It bridges the normative ideals of human rights law and the empirical realities of post-conflict society. Its dual role—as an instrument of legal accountability and social restoration—illustrates how truth commissions can function effectively within decentralized legal systems when adequately supported by political will, financial resources, and societal engagement.

Normative and Empirical Analysis of the Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission

While the previous section focused on KKR Aceh's normative foundations, this part analyzes its empirical implementation and challenges based on documented evidence. The Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Komisi Kebenaran dan Rekonsiliasi Aceh – KKR Aceh) stands as a pivotal mechanism within Indonesia's transitional justice framework, designed to

uncover and address the human rights violations that occurred during the prolonged conflict between the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka – GAM). From its inception under Qanun Aceh No. 17/2013, the Commission was mandated to document violations, promote reconciliation, and recommend reparations for victims, thereby integrating both normative legal frameworks and empirical community-based practices (Eriani et al., 2024).

Between 2016 and 2021, KKR Aceh collected over 5,000 testimonies from victims and witnesses across 17 districts and cities, representing one of the most comprehensive truth-seeking efforts in Indonesia's contemporary history. The majority of victims were civilians who suffered from torture, unlawful killings, sexual violence, enforced disappearances, and the destruction of property (Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2025). These findings confirm that most violations were systemic rather than incidental, revealing patterns of violence perpetrated primarily by state security forces, though insurgent groups were also implicated. The Commission's documentation illustrates that political, civil, economic, and cultural rights were widely violated, leaving lasting trauma on individuals and communities.

Despite these achievements, several challenges constrain the KKR's effectiveness. One critical limitation is data consistency. The Commission faced difficulties in coding, categorizing, and cross-referencing incidents, which led to fragmented narratives (Reza Fahlevi & Murziqin, 2024). Such limitations reflect broader methodological constraints found in transitional justice mechanisms globally (Chavez et al., 2019).

From a normative perspective, the KKR Aceh operates under principles embedded in international human rights law and Indonesia's constitutional commitment to justice and equality. Its mandate is consistent with the UN Basic Principles on the Right to Remedy and Reparation (2005) and the Updated Set of Principles for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights through Action to Combat Impunity. Empirically, however, the Commission's impact depends on political will, financial continuity, and public trust (Stan & Nedelsky, 2023). The expiry of Aceh's special autonomy fund poses a significant threat to its sustainability and ability to deliver long-term reparative justice.

The implementation of restorative measures, such as public hearings, victim rehabilitation, and symbolic reparations, reflects an effort to harmonize restorative justice and legal accountability. Rather than relying solely on retributive mechanisms, KKR Aceh embodies a localized interpretation of transitional justice that prioritizes healing and social cohesion. These initiatives are further strengthened by community participation, where religious and customary leaders facilitate reconciliation and ensure cultural legitimacy (Ikhwan et al., 2024).

In the empirical dimension, several operational weaknesses hindered comprehensive truth recovery. Unequal geographical representation, technical limitations in data management, and sociopolitical barriers reduced the accuracy of findings. Nevertheless, the aggregation of thousands of testimonies produced a representative understanding of violence patterns. KKR's analytical reports identified four main types of abuses: torture, sexual violence, extrajudicial killings, and enforced disappearances (Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2025).

The Aceh case also provides significant policy learning. The Commission's hybrid approach—combining legal analysis, psychosocial support, and community dialogue—offers a replicable model for other post-conflict regions in Indonesia. It bridges the gap between legal formalism and social restoration, underscoring that justice is not only achieved in courtrooms but also through truth-telling and acknowledgment. The model aligns with the transformative justice framework, emphasizing structural reform and moral repair as integral to reconciliation.

KKR Aceh's normative legitimacy arises from its foundation in regional autonomy law, while its empirical legitimacy derives from sustained engagement with victims and communities. The Commission's data-driven recommendations have influenced regional policymaking,

including the design of rehabilitation programs and the formulation of Aceh's Human Rights Action Plan. This demonstrates how subnational truth commissions can effectively shape national transitional justice discourse (Eriani et al., 2024).

However, as highlighted in contemporary scholarship, the success of transitional justice mechanisms relies heavily on continuous institutional support and international cooperation. KKR Aceh's collaboration with the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) and UNDP Indonesia has enhanced methodological rigor and fostered comparative learning with other commissions. Such partnerships are vital to ensure that truth commissions evolve from symbolic institutions into effective agents of change.

The broader implication of Aceh's experience lies in the articulation of justice beyond punishment. It demonstrates how a region with strong religious and cultural identity can internalize universal human rights principles without undermining local traditions. By integrating normative frameworks and empirical realities, KKR Aceh exemplifies contextualized justice, where international standards are applied in a way that respects local values and historical complexities (Eriani et al., 2024).

In conclusion, KKR Aceh's efforts mark a significant contribution to Indonesia's transitional justice landscape. Despite data and institutional limitations, the Commission succeeded in creating a space for truth-telling, promoting reconciliation, and strengthening the moral fabric of post-conflict Aceh. The balance between normative legality and empirical implementation underlines the potential of localized truth commissions to operationalize justice that is both culturally legitimate and universally principled. Sustaining such mechanisms requires political consistency, legal reinforcement, and societal collaboration to ensure that the lessons of Aceh continue to shape Indonesia's broader human rights development.

The Urgency of Sustainability and Human Rights Implications of the Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission (KKR Aceh)

The sustainability of KKR Aceh is integral to Indonesia's transitional justice agenda. Institutional continuity ensures that victims of past human rights violations are not re-victimized through state neglect or the discontinuation of reparative programs. Studies emphasize that long-term mechanisms of truth-seeking, rehabilitation, and reconciliation are essential to building sustainable peace after armed conflict (Gready, 2022). KKR Aceh's structure—derived from Qanun Aceh No. 17 of 2013—embodies both a legal and moral responsibility of the state to uphold victims' rights within Indonesia's decentralized governance framework.

Without sustainable funding and political commitment, transitional justice institutions risk institutional fatigue. The expiration of Aceh's *special autonomy fund* in 2024 may jeopardize KKR's operations. Ensuring sustainability requires embedding KKR's functions within the formal legal framework of Indonesia, accompanied by periodic evaluations and financial autonomy to avoid politicization.

Sustainability also entails knowledge preservation and institutional memory. Archiving testimonies and evidence collected by KKR Aceh contributes to the collective memory of the conflict and strengthens deterrence against future violations (Hansen, 2019). In this regard, Aceh's experience parallels the South African *Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)*, where public access to archival records became a cornerstone of national reconciliation. Therefore, sustaining KKR Aceh means sustaining the truth itself—protecting historical narratives from political erasure and ensuring continuous education on human rights.

KKR Aceh plays a pivotal role in the normative consolidation of human rights (*Hak Asasi Manusia*) in Indonesia. Its establishment reinforces the state's constitutional

obligation to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights as articulated in Articles 28A–28J of the 1945 Constitution. The Commission's findings and recommendations bridge the normative framework of human rights with empirical realities faced by victims, thereby influencing policy reform.

From a normative standpoint, KKR Aceh promotes the domestication of international human rights standards such as the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) and the *Convention against Torture* (CAT). The integration of these instruments within local legal orders strengthens Indonesia's compliance with international obligations (Eriani et al., 2024). Empirically, however, the implementation of these norms remains limited due to fragmented institutional coordination and fluctuating political will. Research by (Lorion & Murray, 2023) highlights that subnational human rights institutions like KKR Aceh often face challenges in harmonizing their mandates with central policies—a gap that demands legal synchronization and administrative clarity.

The contribution of KKR Aceh extends beyond legal frameworks into the realm of social transformation. Its community-based reconciliation initiatives serve as a platform for participatory justice, fostering trust between victims, perpetrators, and the state. Empirical evidence from post-conflict regions suggests that localized truth mechanisms increase legitimacy and facilitate deeper reconciliation (Niyitunga, 2024). For Aceh, this localized approach aligns with the region's traditions, embedding reconciliation within cultural norms rather than relying solely on formal judicial proceedings.

Moreover, KKR Aceh's data on violations and victim testimonies constitute a vital resource for national human rights institutions. The integration of this data into policy formulation enhances accountability mechanisms and informs reparative justice programs at the national level. Similar practices have been documented in Colombia's *Commission for the Clarification of Truth*, where evidence gathered by local commissions informed nationwide reforms (Downing & Bodewig, 2024). Such integration demonstrates how regional truth commissions can contribute to a coherent national transitional justice strategy.

The Broader Implications for Indonesia's Legal and Political Stability

Beyond Aceh, the Commission's experience offers lessons for Indonesia's broader pursuit of legal stability and democratic consolidation. KKR Aceh's work contributes to stabilizing Indonesia's democratic transition by addressing the structural causes of violence and impunity. Reconciliation and truth-seeking are not merely retrospective exercises but preventative tools against the re-emergence of conflict (Martín et al., 2022). In this regard, the sustainability of KKR Aceh underpins the resilience of Indonesia's legal order, as unresolved past injustices often resurface as political grievances.

The Commission's success also has implications for the development of *restorative justice* models in Indonesian law. KKR's non-judicial approach aligns with restorative principles that prioritize repair, rehabilitation, and reintegration over punishment. This approach supports the National Human Rights Action Plan (RANHAM) and complements judicial processes managed by Komnas HAM. When implemented cohesively, these mechanisms strengthen the rule of law (*the rule of law*) by promoting fairness, transparency, and community participation (Ihsan, 2024).

On the political level, KKR Aceh exemplifies the potential for decentralization to advance human rights governance. As one of Indonesia's few regionally mandated truth commissions, KKR Aceh demonstrates that local institutions can effectively address human rights issues that central authorities may overlook. This decentralization of justice reflects Indonesia's plural legal system, where *qanun* (regional regulations) interact dynamically with national legislation (Afandi & Bagaskoro, 2024).

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Drawing on the preceding analyses, this section outlines actionable recommendations to ensure the institutional sustainability and effectiveness of KKR Aceh. Ensuring the effectiveness and continuity of KKR Aceh requires strategic measures that combine legal reform, financial stability, and public participation. First, the central government must institutionalize KKR's status through a national regulation recognizing its role within Indonesia's transitional justice framework. Second, dedicated budget lines—both from national and Aceh's regional funds—should be secured to prevent operational interruptions. Third, partnerships with civil society, academia, and international organizations can strengthen capacity and promote evidence-based advocacy (Ramirez and Wigender, 2025).

Lastly, integrating KKR Aceh's lessons into national curricula and professional legal education will reinforce societal commitment to justice and accountability. Education and awareness initiatives create a preventive culture against human rights violations and nurture empathy toward victims (Waghid, 2024). When sustained institutionally, KKR Aceh's model could evolve into a national paradigm for truth and reconciliation—embedding justice within Indonesia's democratic ethos.

CONCLUSION

The Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission (KKR Aceh) embodies Indonesia's innovative experiment in localized transitional justice—integrating legal mandates with cultural and religious values to restore dignity, truth, and social harmony. Rooted in Law No. 11 of 2006 and Qanun No. 17 of 2013, the Commission has contributed significantly to truth-seeking, rehabilitation, and reconciliation through community participation, symbolic reparations, and victim-centered initiatives. Its restorative approach demonstrates that justice extends beyond prosecution, emphasizing moral accountability, empathy, and collective healing.

However, KKR Aceh's sustainability remains fragile. The expiration of Aceh's special autonomy fund, limited coordination with national institutions, and the absence of enforceable authority hinder its long-term impact. To ensure continuity, its role must be institutionalized within Indonesia's broader human rights framework, supported by consistent funding, legal reinforcement, and national-local collaboration.

Ultimately, KKR Aceh offers valuable lessons for Indonesia and other post-conflict regions: reconciliation must be both restorative and transformative—anchored in truth, responsive to victims, and sustained by institutional integrity. By bridging normative ideals and empirical realities, the Commission not only addresses the wounds of the past but also strengthens the foundations of peace, democracy, and the rule of law in Indonesia's plural legal system.

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