

STRENGTHENING SELF-AWARENESS OF JUVENILE OFFENDERS THROUGH PSYCHOLOGY-BASED COMMUNICATION MEDIA

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Abstract. The study aims to analyze the process of strengthening self-awareness among juvenile offenders through psychology-based communication media and its implications for rehabilitation and social reintegration. The research is significant because it addresses the need for interventions that extend beyond normative approaches by fostering deep, internal transformation in children, a key factor for successful rehabilitation and long-term societal acceptance. A qualitative method was employed using in-depth interviews, observations, and caregiver reports. The findings indicate significant changes in juvenile offenders after the intervention, including improved self-regulation (the ability to control emotions), the development of empathy, and a willingness to take responsibility for past actions. Additionally, caregivers reported changes in their attitudes, including greater openness, increased cooperation, and reduced defensiveness in daily interactions. These results demonstrate that enhancing self-awareness builds the psychosocial readiness of juvenile offenders to engage in rehabilitation more meaningfully and facilitates social reintegration, as they become more easily accepted by their families and communities. Furthermore, this study emphasizes that psychology-based communication serves as a sustainable intervention strategy, as it fosters internal motivation that drives change from within. Thus, the research contributes theoretically to the field of educational communication studies and offers practical implications for developing more comprehensive and inclusive rehabilitation programs for juvenile offenders.

Keywords: Self Awareness, Juvenile Offenders, Communication Media.

INTRODUCTION

Research on juvenile offenders or children in conflict with the law (ABH) generally emphasizes moral development, religious education, job skills training, and legal-based counseling. The primary focus of these interventions is on the social reintegration of ABH children to ensure their acceptance into society and the prevention of recidivism or the recurrence of criminal acts. While this approach is important, it tends to be normative and corrective, often neglecting deeper psychological aspects. Therefore, there is a need to develop intervention models that focus not only on social order (Atiyah et al., 2020) but also on strengthening the intrapersonal aspects of ABH children (Nuzul & Amin, 2021; Odiljon, 2023; Pertiwi & Saimima, 2022).

From a psychological perspective, self-awareness is a crucial foundation for a person's personal development. This self-awareness is closely related to self-regulation (Fiqih et al., 2025; Robson et al., 2020), empathy for others (Lutfiah Zahra & Miratul Hayati, 2022; Sultan & Khan, 2025), and more responsible moral decision-making (Bosch et al., 2025; Kostić, 2023). Individuals with good self-awareness are able to understand their emotional states, their values, and the impact of their actions. Unfortunately, in the context of children with ADHD, this aspect is rarely the focus of interventions. Yet, low self-awareness can exacerbate their vulnerability to risky behavior and reoffending.

Studies in educational communication have utilized a variety of media, from digital media and interactive modules to experience-based simulations, to enhance students' knowledge and skills. However, to date, there has been little research specifically linking the use of psychology-based communication media to efforts to strengthen self-awareness in children in correctional institutions (Antonopoulou, 2024; Le et al., 2023). Yet, various studies show that children with disabilities often have low self-awareness, making it difficult to recognize emotions, understand moral values, and

recognize the impact of their actions on others. Existing correctional programs tend to emphasize adherence to rules rather than encouraging reflection and self-awareness.

Psychology-based communication media has the potential to be an effective intervention tool for children with ADHD. Examples include reflective videos that show the consequences of actions, role-playing simulations that allow children to put themselves in another person's perspective, or interactive narratives that encourage them to reflect on personal experiences. The mechanism of action of these media begins with the child receiving a stimulus, then triggers a process of perception, reflection, and internalization of values, ultimately resulting in strengthened self-awareness (Kurniawan et al., 2022; Setiyaningsih et al., 2023). Thus, psychology-based communication media not only conveys educational messages but also stimulates a process of in-depth reflection that impacts the cognitive and affective aspects of children with ADHD.

The relevant theoretical framework in this research is Self-Awareness Theory proposed by Duval & Wicklund (1973). This theory explains that self-awareness emerges when individuals are directed to focus on themselves, enabling them to reflect on their behavior (Marhamah, 2023; Ummah et al., 2022), values, and their consequences (Mizan & Uce, 2025). For ABH, this process is crucial because it fosters an understanding that their actions impact not only themselves but also others and the social environment. Therefore, Self-Awareness Theory can serve as a theoretical foundation for designing interventions through educational communication media.

Furthermore, a communication psychology perspective also provides an important framework for understanding. Communication psychology emphasizes that the right media can facilitate the process of internalizing messages through both cognitive and affective aspects simultaneously. This means that messages are not only understood rationally but also felt emotionally by the recipient (Handayani & Lestari, 2025). For ABH, this combination is crucial because it bridges the gap between knowledge of right and wrong and deeper emotional awareness. This can increase the likelihood of more sustainable behavioral change.

From an educational perspective, media also serves as an effective means of creating interactive and reflective learning experiences (Setiyaningsih, L. A., & Jatmikowati, 2019). Educational media enable students to actively engage in the learning process, rather than simply passive recipients of information (Anikeze & Okpalaibekwe, 2024; Mihailidis, 2009). By providing experiences that encourage reflection, children with disabilities (ABH) can more easily internalize relevant moral and social values. Therefore, integrating educational media with a communication psychology approach offers significant opportunities for designing more humanistic development strategies oriented toward strengthening the self-capacity of ABH.

Based on this description, this study presents a novelty by integrating the concepts of self-awareness, communication psychology, and educational media in the context of children in conflict with the law. The focus of this research is not merely on providing information or moral guidance, but rather on the process of strengthening self-awareness that enables ABH to understand themselves more holistically. Thus, the research question posed is: "How is the process of strengthening the self-awareness of Children in Conflict with the Law (ABH) through the use of psychology-based educational communication media?" This question becomes the basis for research to offer a more innovative, reflective, and intrapersonal change-oriented intervention model.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. This approach was chosen because the research focused on an in-depth understanding of the process of self-awareness formation in children in conflict with the law, specifically from a psychological communication perspective, leading to an innovative, reflective, and intrapersonal change-oriented intervention model. Given these limitations, the researchers employed a data collection method that explored

participants' experiences more comprehensively through interaction and interpretation, thus capturing subjective meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

The research subjects were selected using purposive sampling (Patton, 2015), selecting children undergoing legal proceedings at the Blitar City Special Child Development Institution (LPKA). The focus of the study was children aged 12–18 who were undergoing their rehabilitation. Five children were categorized into various criminal backgrounds, including murder, drug abuse, and child protection. This was intended to enrich the data through an interpersonal communication perspective.

Table 1 Informant Identity

Informant	Initials	Age (Years)	Gender	Criminal Case
Informant 1	DH	16	Female	Murder Casse
Informant 2	FS	17	Male	Drug Case
Informant 3	AA	15	Male	Abuse Case
Informant 4	VN	17	Female	Abuse Case
Informant 5	R	17	ale	Abuse Case

Source: LPKA I Blitar, Jawa Timur Data

Data was collected through three main techniques: observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews. Interviews were conducted to explore children's understanding of themselves, their communication processes, and the role of the social environment in shaping self-awareness. Observations were conducted to record children's interactions with mentors and fellow mentors, while documentation was obtained from mentoring notes, counseling reports, and relevant legal documents. Expert validation and method validation were conducted during the pilot test.

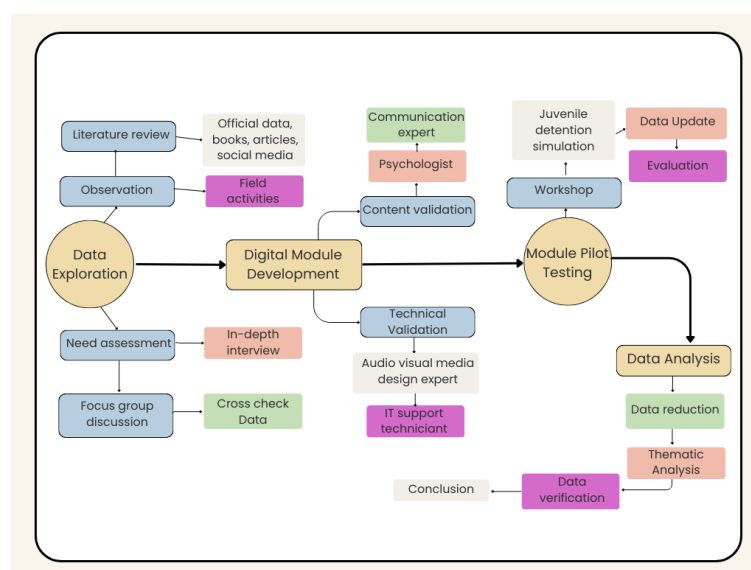


Figure 1. The Arrangement of Methodological Steps (Data processed by researchers, 2025)

Data analysis began with categorizing findings and data, then sorting them according to the research's limitations. This was followed by a thematic analysis based on the literature and findings. Before concluding the study, data verification was conducted to produce a description that emphasized communication patterns and psychological aspects of children's development of self-awareness.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

1.1 Initial Conditions of Juvenile Offenders' Self-Awareness and the Need for Intervention

Juvenile offenders (ABH) generally have difficulty recognizing and naming their emotions. When asked about their feelings when committing an unlawful act, most ABH are only able to name basic emotions such as "angry" or "annoyed," but are unable to explain in more detail the accompanying psychological state. This indicates poor emotional literacy, a crucial component of self-awareness (Alemdar & Anılan, 2020). The inability to accurately recognize emotions implies weak self-control in dealing with situations that trigger conflict.

In addition to difficulty recognizing emotions, ABH also demonstrate limitations in understanding social and moral values. For example, when asked to explain the difference between right and wrong or rights and obligations, their answers tend to be normative and lack depth. Some ABH simply repeat general statements such as "what is right is not to break the rules," without connecting them to personal experiences or social consequences. This suggests that the internalization of moral values has not occurred optimally, resulting in their behavioral orientation being driven more by external factors (rules, punishments) than by internal awareness.

"I often find it difficult to decide on an answer, for example, when asked whether my actions were right or not, the actions that landed me here. Because I feel like I'm defending myself." (Interview with Informant 1, August 2025)

"During counseling, people often ask if breaking the rules should be punished or not, but sometimes I'm confused about which answer is correct, and I don't know which." (Interview with Informant 3, August 2025)

Another important finding is the low level of awareness among ABH of the impact of their behavior on victims, their families, and their social environment. Many of them justify their actions with phrases such as "just following their friends" or "not thinking it through," indicating a lack of reflection on long-term consequences. This lack of awareness of social impact reinforces the view that current development programs still emphasize compliance with rules rather than building self-awareness. Therefore, the need for psychological, reflective, and communicative interventions is urgent to help ABH understand themselves, internalize values, and take responsibility for their behavior.

"Just like everyone else, my life was full of confusion. After coming here, I made more friends. When I do share my thoughts, I usually get bored. Moreover, the activities are always the same. For example, I feel like skipping activities, sometimes I use the excuse of being sick." (Interview with Informant 2, August 2025)

This study found that the coaching patterns applied to ABH tend to be normative, emphasizing adherence to the rules and regulations in place at the coaching institution. The primary focus is on daily discipline, such as following activity schedules, obeying staff instructions, and avoiding violations of internal regulations. While this approach is important for maintaining order, it results in a greater emphasis on external behavioral control than on fostering internal awareness. This makes behavioral changes in ABH more superficial and temporary, as they rely on strict supervision and rules.

"I once broke the rules, skipping my morning routine. I was feeling sad, and my whole body ached. At the time, the staff told me to rest. Then, they said I was wearing too much makeup. I only used lipstick and powder." (Interview with Informant 4, August 2025)

"I was once caught not returning to my room on time, back when I first started here. I didn't understand discipline yet. So I just followed my friends who had been here for a while and didn't think it through." (Interview with Informant 5, August 2025)

Beyond normative practices, existing guidance patterns are also still repetitive, particularly in the form of memorizing religious material and legal knowledge. Many ABH are asked to repeat specific verses or answer legal questions, placing greater emphasis on cognitive mastery. While formally,

these methods provide additional knowledge, the monotonous and one-way learning process leaves little room for ABH to engage in personal reflection. As a result, guidance resembles a routine rather than a meaningful experience that fosters self-awareness.

Research also indicates that the primary focus of guidance is still on compliance rather than developing self-awareness. Program success is often measured by ABH's adherence to rules and minimal disciplinary infractions, rather than their ability to recognize emotions, understand moral values, or take responsibility for their actions. This pattern has the potential to create disparities when ABH return to society, as without close supervision, their behavior may not be guided by personal awareness. Therefore, interventions are needed that transcend normative and repetitive patterns by providing reflective experiences that encourage the internalization of values and strengthen self-awareness.

The initial self-awareness juvenile offenders (ABH) is characterized by limitations in recognizing and naming emotions. This limitation aligns with the concept of emotional literacy proposed by Goleman (1995) as an essential component of self-awareness. Poor emotional recognition makes it difficult for children in conflict to control themselves, leading to impulsive behaviors over controlled responses. This indicates that interventions implemented to date have focused more on external discipline rather than on strengthening the intrapersonal foundations that underlie self-awareness.

In addition to the issue of emotional recognition, this study also found that children in conflict with the law lack a thorough understanding of moral and social values. Their responses, which tended to be normative, indicate that values internalization has not yet fully occurred. Their moral orientation is still based on formal rules or punishment, rather than on reflective internal awareness. This situation reinforces previous research findings that development programs emphasize social reintegration through rule compliance rather than building personal awareness. Without a strong intrapersonal foundation, social reintegration has the potential to be superficial and fragile.

The low awareness of ABH regarding the impact of their behavior on victims, their families, and their social environment also underscores the need for a more reflective approach. Statements such as "just following their friends" or "not thinking it through" illustrate a lack of introspection regarding the long-term consequences of their actions. According to self-awareness theory, the ability to reflect on the impact of behavior on oneself and others is a crucial stage in moral and social development. If this dimension is not strengthened, the rehabilitation process risks failing to develop truly responsible ABH.

The normative and repetitive coaching patterns found in this study further emphasize the gap in approaches. The emphasis on memorizing religious or legal material may increase cognitive knowledge, but it does not necessarily foster intrapersonal awareness. This leaves ABH's behavioral changes superficial, relying more on supervision and rules than on self-awareness born from reflection. Therefore, a more participatory and reflective educational intervention model is urgently needed, so ABH not only know what is right and wrong but also understand the reasons and consequences personally.

Considering these findings, this study confirms that interventions for juvenile offenders must move beyond normative social reintegration to intrapersonal strengthening through self-awareness. Approaches that provide space for ABH to recognize emotions, internalize moral values, and reflect on the impact of their behavior will be more effective in fostering sustainable change. These implications are not only important for rehabilitation within correctional institutions but also for ABH's readiness to face social life upon returning to society. In other words, the success of social reintegration is largely determined by the extent to which interventions can build a strong sense of self-awareness in each ABH individual.

1.2 The Process of Strengthening Self-Awareness Through Psychology-Based Communication Media

The research results show that, from a cognitive perspective, psychology-based communication media successfully helped juvenile offenders (ABH) understand the impact of their past misbehavior. After watching a reflective video showing the consequences of deviant actions, most ABH were able to articulate the negative consequences, both for themselves and others. They began

to associate behavior with its consequences, such as feelings of loss, material loss, and even damage to social relationships. This demonstrates that appropriately designed media can trigger critical thinking processes that were previously rare in ABH when they only received normative guidance.

From an affective perspective, interactive media such as role-playing simulations had a significant emotional impact. Some ABH appeared silent, lowered their heads, and even admitted guilt after acting out the victim's role or watching a narrative depicting the suffering of others. These emotional expressions indicate a deeper affective involvement, so the message was not only received rationally but also touched their feelings. This is in line with the concept of communication psychology, which emphasizes the importance of the emotional aspect in the internalization of messages, as without affective engagement, behavioral change tends to be superficial.

Reflective findings emerged when several ABH spontaneously expressed new awareness, for example, by saying, "It turns out the victim was just as hurt as I was when treated like that." This statement demonstrates that educational communication media not only imparts knowledge or evokes emotions, but also encourages ABH to deeply reflect on their personal experiences. The process of perception, reflection, and internalization of values developed through psychology-based media is the core of strengthening self-awareness. Thus, media interventions have proven effective in stimulating ABH's self-awareness, which is a crucial foundation for rehabilitation and social reintegration.

"I only realized that the victim was also hurt when I ganged up on her and beat her. I realized this after several sessions of counseling." (Interview with Informant 5, August 2025)

The first stage identified in the process of strengthening self-awareness is perception. Through psychology-based media, such as reflective videos, audio narratives, and interactive simulations, ABH receive messages packaged visually and emotionally. The messages presented are not merely informative but also touch on aspects of their daily life experiences, such as conflicts with peers or legal consequences. At this stage, ABH begin to recognize the content of the messages and relate it to basic moral concepts, such as right and wrong or fair and unfair. As a result, they demonstrate cognitive understanding by being able to recount the impact of misbehavior.

"After completing the module and counseling, I finally know what is right and wrong, and what is fair and what is not, because the module teaches and provides live examples of what is right and what is wrong." (Interview with Informant 3, August 2025)

Perceptions constructed through media not only operate cognitively but also trigger affective reactions. Some ABH exhibit emotional expressions, such as falling silent, looking down, or admitting guilt after witnessing scenes depicting the victim's suffering. These responses indicate that the messages received through the media go beyond intellectual understanding and also into the emotional realm. In the context of communication psychology, this affective engagement is key to deeper internalization of the message, as emotions serve as a bridge to self-awareness.

The next stage is reflection, a process in which ABH begin to reflect on their personal experiences in relation to media messages. For example, after participating in role-playing simulations, some ABH stated that they "felt like they were in the victim's shoes" or "remembered when their own family was disappointed by their actions." This reflection demonstrates that the media can encourage ABH to review past actions and recognize feelings and values they previously lacked understanding. This process aligns with self-awareness theory, which asserts that self-awareness increases when individuals are guided to critically examine themselves.

"After reflecting several times, I realized that my family was disappointed in me because of my mistakes. My actions seemed unforgivable, but with guidance, life changed for the better." (Interview with Informant 4, August 2025)

"My family never visited, so I felt sad. After reflecting, I felt less blaming my family because I felt like my actions were unjustified, even though I was emotional. I truly regret it." (Interview with Informant 1, August 2025)

Deep reflection then develops into internalization of values. At this stage, ABH not only recognizes mistakes but also demonstrates recognition and a willingness to change. This is reflected in their

statements emphasizing the importance of self-improvement, respect for others, and not repeating harmful actions. This internalization process is crucial because it connects cognitive understanding and affective emotions into personal commitment. In other words, psychology-based media successfully transforms perception into reflection, leading to attitudinal changes that are more oriented toward self-awareness.

Overall, the perception-reflection-internalization stages demonstrate that psychology-based educational communication media are effective as a means of strengthening self-awareness for ABH. This process is not instantaneous, but involves gradual processing of messages to form a more solid self-awareness. The implication of these results is the need to develop development programs that emphasize interactive and reflective experiences, rather than simply memorizing rules or normative compliance. With this approach, ABH can build a positive identity and be better prepared for social reintegration.

Psychology-based communication media not only serves as a means of conveying information but also as a transformative instrument capable of triggering self-reflection in Children in Conflict with the Law (ABH). When ABH watch reflective videos or participate in role-playing simulations, they not only cognitively understand the consequences of misbehavior but also experience its emotional impact. This aligns with self-awareness theory (Duval & Wicklund, 1972), which emphasizes that self-awareness emerges when individuals are guided to observe themselves in relation to social norms and consequences. Thus, psychology-based media has been shown to encourage ABH to not only learn "what is right" but also to realize "why it must be right."

This process of strengthening self-awareness works through the stages of perception, reflection, and internalization. In the perception stage, ABH begin to recognize messages packaged in narratives, visuals, and simulations and relate them to their lived experiences. Next, the reflection stage encourages ABH to review personal experiences in relation to moral values and social impacts, such as admitting guilt or realizing that victims also suffer. The final stage, internalization, demonstrates that ABH begin to develop a commitment to change and take responsibility. This gradual pattern confirms that media not only imparts knowledge but also profoundly changes awareness and attitudes.

These findings demonstrate that an interactive educational communication approach is far more effective than a one-way, normative lecture method. In lectures, ABH (Children with Disabilities) tend to receive only cognitive knowledge without emotional and reflective engagement, resulting in superficial results. In contrast, psychology-based media engages ABH's active participation, both emotionally and intellectually, resulting in more meaningful messages. This perspective aligns with the concept of empowering media, which emphasizes that media should not only convey information but also encourage recipients to critically reflect on themselves and their environment.

Furthermore, the emotional engagement that arises from using interactive media strengthens the internalization of values. When ABH lower their heads, remain silent, or express regret, it is a sign that the message has touched their affective domain. These emotions serve as a crucial bridge between cognitive understanding and behavioral change. Without emotional engagement, moral messages will remain merely normative knowledge that is easily forgotten. In other words, psychology-based media plays a role in transforming the learning experience from a mere routine to a transformative experience capable of fostering self-awareness.

Overall, this study demonstrates that psychology-based communication media is effective as an empowerment strategy for ABH (Indonesian Youth) because it integrates cognitive, affective, and reflective aspects. This approach emphasizes that successful self-awareness building cannot be achieved solely by emphasizing compliance with rules, but rather through interactive, reflective, and emotionally engaging learning experiences. The practical implication of these findings is the need for development institutions to develop participatory, interactive media-based programs so that ABH do not merely "comply" within the context of rehabilitation but actually experience self-transformation that supports successful social reintegration.

1.3 Implications of Strengthening Self-Awareness for the Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration of Juvenile Offenders

The process of strengthening self-awareness in children with disabilities (ABH) through psychology-based communication media has significantly contributed to their readiness for social reintegration. Research findings show that ABH who begin to recognize themselves and understand the impact of their actions become more open, cooperative, and less defensive. According to social reintegration theory, the process of an individual's reintegration into society is strongly influenced by self-awareness, as only with such awareness can a person assess the social consequences of their actions and build a commitment to not repeat them. Therefore, this intervention not only fosters emotional regulation and empathy but also fosters mental readiness to re-interact in the broader social environment.

Compared with normative development approaches, strengthening self-awareness has the advantage of being more sustainable. Normative approaches often emphasize compliance with external rules and discipline, but do not always foster profound change within ABH. Research results show that when ABH are given space for self-reflection, they comply not simply due to external pressure but are driven by an internal motivation to improve themselves. This aligns with the view of educational psychology that behavioral changes born of intrinsic motivation are more lasting than simply following rules out of obligation. The psychology-based communication media used in this intervention served as a means of reflection and dialogue that encouraged these internal changes. The openness of ABH participants in expressing their feelings, their willingness to accept feedback without defensiveness, and their statements of responsibility such as "I have to change" or "I want to apologize" indicated that therapeutic communication was able to tap into the deepest layers of their self-awareness. Social reintegration theory explains that reintegration cannot be imposed from the outside but must begin with the individual's willingness to admit mistakes and take responsibility. Therefore, this communication process serves a dual function: as a means of development and as a mechanism for internalizing values.

This research also confirms a new contribution to the field of educational communication studies using a psychological approach, particularly regarding ABH rehabilitation. Generally, research on ABH rehabilitation emphasizes legal and normative aspects. However, these findings broaden the perspective by demonstrating how communication guided by psychological principles can be an instrument for behavioral transformation. This means that communication goes beyond simply conveying information to building awareness, empathy, and responsibility. This makes this research relevant for enriching non-formal education models oriented toward psychosocial recovery. Thus, the process of strengthening self-awareness through psychology-based communication media not only impacts the individual level but also contributes to the successful social reintegration of people with disabilities (ABH). Those who are more self-aware, able to regulate their emotions, and ready to take responsibility will be more easily accepted by their families, peers, and the community. This is what makes this intervention crucial, as social reintegration requires not only structural adjustments but also personal readiness. Therefore, the results of this study provide empirical evidence that strengthening self-awareness can be a key strategy in the sustainable rehabilitation and social reintegration of ABH.

CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that strengthening self-awareness through psychology-based communication plays a crucial role in the rehabilitation and social reintegration of children in conflict with the law (ABH). Significant changes were seen in their openness, cooperative attitudes, emotional regulation skills, empathy, and readiness to take responsibility for their actions. These changes not only indicate the success of short-term interventions but also serve as long-term assets in preventing recidivism. Thus, self-awareness has been shown to be a psychosocial foundation capable of strengthening the readiness of children in conflict with the law to be re-accepted within their families, communities, and communities.

Based on these findings, this study recommends that strengthening self-awareness be a primary strategy in ABH rehabilitation programs, particularly with a psychology-based communication approach that emphasizes self-reflection and empathy. Furthermore, further research with a broader scope, involving the roles of families, communities, and relevant institutions, is needed to ensure a

more comprehensive and sustainable social reintegration process for children in conflict with the law. Comparative research between normative guidance models and psychology-based approaches is also needed to develop effective intervention models to support successful ABH rehabilitation.

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