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Criminological Analysis of Armed-Group Violence and Its Relevance to Crimes Against Humanity in Papua

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Abstract

Armed violence in Papua constitutes a criminological issue that concerns not only acts of violence but also the victimization of civilians and the disruption of social life. This study aims to analyze the patterns and characteristics of violence associated with Armed Criminal Groups (Kelompok Kriminal Bersenjata, KKB), its impacts on civilians, and its relevance to the contextual elements of crimes against humanity. This study employs normative legal research with a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach, using literature review and documentation techniques. Data were obtained from national laws and regulations, international legal instruments, government documents, human rights and humanitarian reports, and relevant scholarly literature. The data were analyzed through data reduction or condensation, data display, theory- and law-based interpretation, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings identify five major patterns of violence: shootings and killings, burning or destruction of public facilities, hostage-taking, intimidation, and threats of violence associated with population displacement. These forms of violence result in direct victimization, including death, injury, threats, and trauma, as well as indirect victimization through disruptions to security, livelihoods, education, healthcare services, and the fulfillment of basic needs. The criminological analysis indicates that Conflict Theory helps explain the structural context of the conflict, while Differential Association Theory provides a framework for understanding the potential reproduction of violence through group interaction. Several documented patterns of violence demonstrate analytical relevance to specific conduct elements within the framework of crimes against humanity. However, the available documentary evidence remains insufficient to establish the fulfillment of all contextual elements or individual criminal responsibility. This study underscores the importance of integrating structural factors, group processes, civilian victimization, and international legal standards in understanding armed violence in Papua.

INTRODUCTION

Armed conflict in Papua constitutes a security and humanitarian issue that persists within a complex socio-political context. Violence not only involves confrontations between armed groups and security forces but also places civilians at risk of being killed, injured, intimidated, displaced, and deprived of access to essential services. Studies on Papua indicate that the conflict is associated with contested political history, issues of legitimacy, development disparities, identity dynamics, and relations between the state and Papuan communities. Therefore, violence in Papua cannot be adequately understood merely as a collection of individual criminal acts. It must be situated within the broader structure of the conflict to understand its patterns, contexts, actors, and social consequences (Viartasiwi, 2018; Arfiansyah, 2026; Human Rights Monitor [HRM], 2025; ACAPS, 2024).

The escalation of violence in recent years has further highlighted the importance of protecting civilians. Reports on the Papuan conflict indicate civilian casualties, population displacement, damage to facilities, and disruption of access to education and healthcare services. Human Rights Monitor reported that more than 85,000 people remained internally displaced at the end of 2024 following a series of armed conflicts and security operations since 2018. ACAPS also reported that the escalation of the

conflict in 2024 increased humanitarian needs across the six Papuan provinces, particularly among internally displaced persons. Recent research on civilian protection in Papua further indicates that experiences of violence and communities' capacity to develop protection strategies vary according to local development conditions, geopolitical circumstances, and the demographic composition of particular areas (Arfiansyah, 2026; ACAPS, 2024; HRM, 2024, 2025).

From a criminological perspective, recurrent armed violence requires an analysis that extends beyond the legal categorization of perpetrators' actions. Criminology situates crime within the relationships among individuals, groups, social structures, distributions of power, and the environments in which such behavior develops. Conflict perspectives, for example, provide a framework for understanding the relationships among structural inequality, resource distribution, marginalization, and the emergence of social conflict. Meanwhile, the social learning perspective embodied in *Differential Association Theory* explains how values, definitions, techniques, and justifications for deviant behavior can be learned through intensive interaction within groups. These two perspectives enable collective violence to be analyzed not only in terms of the individual actions of perpetrators but also through the structural conditions and group processes that sustain patterns of violence (Newburn, 2017; Carrington et al., 2019; DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2018; Siegel, 2023).

This framework is relevant to understanding armed-group violence in Papua. Shootings, killings, hostage-taking, intimidation, the burning of public facilities, and acts resulting in population displacement demonstrate that the consequences of violence extend beyond direct victims. Violence can create prolonged insecurity, restrict population mobility, affect economic activities, disrupt education and healthcare services, and compel communities to leave their places of residence. Research on civilian protection in Papua shows that communities develop various strategies to cope with violence, including the mobilization of local and international networks. At the same time, humanitarian reports demonstrate that conflict-induced displacement can sever communities' access to basic needs and public services (Arfiansyah, 2026; ACAPS, 2024; HRM, 2024, 2025).

This dimension of victimization also raises a more complex legal question concerning the boundary between ordinary crimes, violence occurring within conflict, and crimes against humanity. Under international criminal law, not every killing, mistreatment, population displacement, or act of violence against civilians automatically constitutes a crime against humanity. Article 7 of the Rome Statute subjects such acts to specific contextual requirements, particularly that the acts must form part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population and that the perpetrator must have knowledge of the attack. Accordingly, the scale of victimization, patterns of conduct, degree of organization, relationships among acts, targeting of civilian populations, and the context of a state or organizational policy constitute important elements for distinguishing crimes against humanity from ordinary crimes (Kirsch, 2009; Sadat, 2013; Wahyuni & Lestarika, 2026).

This distinction is important in research on Papua. Using the term crimes against humanity without examining the contextual elements may lead to overly broad conclusions. Conversely, disregarding

recurrent patterns of violence against civilian populations may also limit the analytical capacity to understand the severity of victimization. Therefore, this study does not begin from the assumption that all acts committed by armed groups in Papua constitute crimes against humanity. Instead, it employs the concept as an analytical framework to examine the extent to which documented patterns of conduct demonstrate characteristics relevant to the elements of an attack directed against a civilian population, including widespread or systematic characteristics, patterns of repetition, forms of organization, and consequences for civilians (Kirsch, 2009; Wahyuni & Lestarika, 2026; Diallo, 2019).

The literature on the Papuan conflict has developed through political, human rights, legal, development, peace, and civilian protection perspectives. Viartasiwi (2018), for example, examined the use of history as a source of legitimacy in the Papua-Indonesia conflict. Other studies have focused on responses to armed groups within legal and security frameworks, while Arfiansyah (2026) focused on civilian strategies for protecting themselves from violence. This literature provides important contributions to understanding the Papuan conflict. However, there remains scope for integrating patterns of armed-group violence, criminological mechanisms that may explain collective violence, civilian victimization, and the assessment of the contextual elements of crimes against humanity within a single analytical framework (Viartasiwi, 2018; Rinasti et al., 2022; Arfiansyah, 2026; Nugraha et al., 2026).

The novelty of this study lies in integrating three levels of analysis within a single criminological framework: the structural conditions of conflict, group processes that may sustain the reproduction of violence, and the victimization of civilians. This framework is subsequently linked to a limited assessment of the contextual elements of crimes against humanity. Unlike previous studies that have tended to examine the Papuan conflict separately through political, development, human rights, security, or legal perspectives, this study places patterns of violence, criminological mechanisms, impacts on civilians, and the boundaries of international legal classification within a single analytical model.

Based on this research gap, the study develops an approach that integrates criminological analysis with victimization analysis and international criminal law. This approach conceptualizes armed-group violence as a phenomenon comprising three interconnected dimensions. First, the structural dimension concerns social conditions and conflict. Second, the group dimension concerns the reproduction, learning, and normalization of violent behavior. Third, the victimization dimension is reflected in the direct and indirect consequences experienced by civilians. Integrating these three dimensions enables the analysis to move from the question of why violence emerges to how violence is reproduced, what patterns are formed, and how these patterns affect the lives of civilian populations (Arfiansyah, 2026; Carrington et al., 2019; Siegel, 2023; HRM, 2025).

This study aims to analyze the patterns and characteristics of violence committed by armed groups in Papua and to assess their relevance to the contextual elements of crimes against humanity. It also analyzes the social impacts of violence on civilians, particularly in relation to security, population displacement, economic conditions, education, and humanitarian conditions. Through this focus, the study is expected to contribute to the field of conflict criminology by integrating structural analysis,

group dynamics, civilian victimization, and international criminal law standards in explaining armed violence in Papua.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study employs normative legal research with a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach and a library research method. Document analysis is appropriate for the systematic examination and interpretation of documentary materials, particularly when a study seeks to identify recurring patterns, contextual meanings, and relationships across legal, institutional, and scholarly sources (Bowen, 2009; Morgan, 2022). This design is used to analyze the patterns and characteristics of violence associated with Armed Criminal Groups (Kelompok Kriminal Bersenjata, KKB) in Papua, their impacts on civilians, and their relevance to the elements of crimes against humanity. The study focuses on legal materials, criminological literature, official reports, human rights reports, scholarly publications, and other documents related to armed conflict in Papua.

The research approach combines statutory, conceptual, and case approaches. The statutory approach is used to examine national legal provisions and international legal instruments relating to the protection of civilians and crimes against humanity. The conceptual approach is used to interpret the findings through criminological theories. The case approach is used to examine incidents of violence documented in government reports, human rights reports, previous studies, and other relevant documentary sources.

The criminological analysis focuses on Conflict Theory and Differential Association Theory. Conflict Theory is used to examine structural conditions associated with the conflict, including inequality, marginalization, the distribution of power, and socio-political tensions. Differential Association Theory is used in a limited manner to interpret possible processes of learning, justification, and reproduction of violent behavior through group interaction. Both theories are employed as interpretive frameworks and are not used to establish deterministic causal relationships.

Scope and Units of Analysis

This study focuses on armed violence in Papua, with particular attention to acts that the research sources associate with armed groups referred to as Armed Criminal Groups (*Kelompok Kriminal Bersenjata*, KKB). The unit of analysis is not individual members of these groups, but rather documented incidents and patterns of violence and their consequences for civilian populations.

The analysis is limited to five categories of conduct that consistently emerge from the research data: (1) shootings and killings; (2) burning or destruction of public facilities; (3) hostage-taking; (4) intimidation or threats against civilians; and (5) acts or threats of violence associated with population displacement. These categories are subsequently analyzed based on their frequency of occurrence across the sources,

patterns of repetition, targets of the acts, the degree of organization identifiable from the documentation, and their consequences for civilians.

The second unit of analysis concerns impacts on civilians. These impacts are classified into six interrelated dimensions based on the research findings: security, economic, educational, health, humanitarian, and basic services. The humanitarian dimension includes deaths and injuries, psychological trauma, internal displacement, loss of housing or livelihoods, and disruption of access to basic needs and essential services.

These analytical boundaries are established to prevent the study from generalizing the entire dynamics of the Papuan conflict. The study also does not seek to determine the individual criminal responsibility of members of particular groups. Instead, it focuses on patterns of violence that can be verified through documentary sources and their implications from a criminological perspective.

Types and Sources of Data

The data used in this article consist of secondary data obtained through literature review and documentation. The data sources include Indonesian laws and regulations, international legal instruments, official government reports, reports from human rights and humanitarian organizations, journal articles, academic books, previous studies, and other documents relevant to armed conflict, criminology, victimization, and crimes against humanity in Papua. The selection of secondary data follows the empirical basis used in the Results section, which is primarily constructed from the analysis of reports, official documents, scholarly literature, and institutional sources.

Primary legal materials are used to establish the relevant normative framework, while secondary legal materials are used to explain concepts, theories, findings from previous studies, and the context of the conflict. Documentary sources concerning specific incidents are used to identify forms of violence, targets, victims, social impacts, and patterns emerging across different reports.

Documents and literature are selected based on their relevance to the research focus, clarity and traceability of their sources, and their capacity to provide information concerning forms of violent conduct, affected populations, social consequences, and the legal context. Divergent information across sources is not reconciled through assumptions but is examined carefully by considering the origin and context of each source.

This approach is necessary because documentation of the Papuan conflict may contain differences in terminology, attribution of actors, casualty figures, and interpretations of events. Therefore, this article limits its conclusions to patterns supported by traceable sources and does not rely on a single report as the sole basis for making legal determinations concerning any individual or group.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through literature review and documentation. The literature review involved the examination of books, journal articles, previous studies, laws and regulations, international legal instruments, government reports, human rights reports, and relevant institutional publications. Documentation was used to collect information on incidents of violence, forms of conduct, targets, victims, and the impacts of the conflict on civilians.

The collected data were then grouped according to the research focus, namely patterns and characteristics of violence, structural factors underlying the conflict, group processes that can be explained criminologically, civilian victimization, and the relevance of patterns of violence to the elements of crimes against humanity.

To maintain interpretive rigor, information concerning incidents and their impacts was compared with other sources where available. This cross-source procedure is particularly important in conflict research because documentary and digital evidence may differ in provenance, attribution, chronology, and completeness, requiring careful source criticism rather than automatic reconciliation (Hauter, 2023). Differences in information were retained as limitations of the evidence and were not resolved by constructing new facts that were not contained in the research sources.

In the victimization analysis, acts targeting or affecting civilians were distinguished from acts directly targeting security personnel. This distinction was necessary because the study specifically assesses the consequences of the conflict for civilian populations and their relevance to the framework of crimes against humanity.

Criminological Analytical Framework

The first level is the identification of patterns of violence. At this stage, the study identifies the forms of conduct, targets, repetition, organization of acts, and their consequences. The purpose is to distinguish individual incidents from patterns of violence that recur across the documentation.

The second level is criminological interpretation. The findings are subsequently analyzed using *Conflict Theory* and *Differential Association Theory*. *Conflict Theory* is used to interpret the relationship between violence and structural conditions documented in the research sources, including inequality, marginalization, the distribution of power, and socio-political tensions. *Differential Association Theory* is used more selectively to examine group characteristics, particularly indications of value learning, justification of violence, group solidarity, and the reproduction of behavior through group interaction.

The third level is the analysis of civilian victimization. This analysis links patterns of violence to their impacts on security, the economy, education, displacement, and the humanitarian conditions of affected communities. In this way, victims are not treated merely as statistical consequences of the conflict but as an important unit of criminological analysis.

Analysis of Relevance to Crimes Against Humanity

The analysis of crimes against humanity is conducted separately from the criminological analysis. This separation is important to prevent the use of an international legal concept as a label for every form of violence identified in the study.

The study uses the contextual elements of *crimes against humanity* as an evaluative framework, rather than as a mechanism for determining individual criminal responsibility. Each pattern of violence against civilians is examined according to the following indicators:

1. there are acts that fall within categories of conduct relevant to civilian populations;
2. there are indications of a course or pattern of conduct rather than merely isolated incidents;
3. there are indications that the acts are directed against civilian populations;
4. there is evidence concerning the scale or systematic nature of the acts; and
5. sufficient documentary information is available to connect individual incidents to a broader pattern of violence.

Based on these indicators, the study does not automatically classify an act as a crime against humanity. The findings are categorized as insufficient evidence, demonstrating relevance to specific elements, or demonstrating a pattern requiring further legal examination. This classification is used because establishing crimes against humanity and individual criminal responsibility requires evidentiary standards and judicial processes that fall beyond the scope of this study.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed qualitatively using a descriptive-analytical approach. Data obtained from the literature review and documentation were classified, systematically organized, and subsequently analyzed based on relevant criminological theories and legal provisions. The analytical process followed three main stages: data reduction or condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2020).

At the data reduction stage, information was selected based on its relevance to patterns of violence, conflict-related factors, civilian victimization, and crimes against humanity. Relevant data were then grouped into themes such as shootings or killings, hostage-taking, intimidation, destruction of facilities, population displacement, security impacts, economic impacts, disruption of education, and humanitarian impacts.

At the data display stage, the findings were organized into narrative descriptions and analytical tables to demonstrate the relationships among forms of violence, characteristics of the acts, affected groups, and social consequences. Information from different sources was compared to identify recurring patterns and to recognize discrepancies within the documentation.

The interpretation stage links the findings to *Conflict Theory* and *Differential Association Theory*, as well as to national legal provisions and the international criminal law framework. Theoretical interpretation is

used to explain the structural context and group processes, while legal analysis is used to assess the relevance of documented patterns to the elements of crimes against humanity.

The final stage involves conclusion drawing and verification. Conclusions were checked against the documentary data to ensure that they did not exceed the available information. Because this study does not undertake judicial fact-finding, the analysis of crimes against humanity is framed as an assessment of the relevance of particular elements rather than as a determination of individual criminal responsibility.

Data Validity and Limitations

The validity of the interpretation was strengthened through cross-source comparison. Government reports, legal documents, human rights and humanitarian reports, and academic publications were used according to their respective functions and characteristics. Comparisons were conducted to assess the consistency of patterns rather than to assume that all sources possessed the same level of authority.

Legal documents were used as the normative basis. Institutional reports and conflict documentation were used to identify reported incidents and impacts. Scholarly publications were used to strengthen the contextual and theoretical interpretation. Where differences existed in attribution, casualty figures, or chronology, these discrepancies were treated as limitations of the data.

The principal limitation of this study lies in its reliance on secondary and documentary data. The study did not conduct field verification of every incident, did not interview members or former members of armed groups, and did not assess the knowledge or intent of individual perpetrators. Therefore, the analysis is limited to patterns that can be traced through the sources used in the study.

RESULTS

Patterns and Characteristics of Armed Violence

Table 1 presents five major patterns of violence associated with KKB, namely shootings and killings, the burning or destruction of public facilities, hostage-taking, intimidation of civilians, and threats of violence associated with population displacement. These patterns appear across the various documents analyzed and indicate that violence is not directed solely at security personnel. Civilians, healthcare workers, teachers, development workers, community leaders, women, children, and people living in conflict-affected areas are also documented as affected groups. The documentary analysis indicates that the targeting of civilians constitutes one of the important characteristics of the identified patterns of violence.

The second characteristic is the recurrence of violent acts. Shootings, burnings, killings, hostage-taking, and intimidation do not appear in the documents as isolated forms of violence but as types of conduct

repeatedly identified across various conflict-related documents. This pattern is interpreted in this study as a repetitive violence pattern. The documentary analysis also identifies indications of group coordination, including division of roles, internal communication, operational strategies, and areas of influence. However, because this study did not directly observe the organizational structures of the groups, these characteristics are treated as patterns reported in the documentary sources rather than as independent verification of the internal structures of each armed group.

The findings further indicate that the consequences of violence extend beyond the immediate targets of an attack. The burning and destruction of public facilities disrupt the use of facilities needed by communities. The hostage-taking of healthcare workers and educators is associated with disruptions to essential services. Intimidation creates psychological pressure, while threats of violence are associated with decisions by some community members to leave conflict-affected areas. Thus, the identified patterns demonstrate a relationship between acts of violence and changes in the living conditions of civilians.

Table 1
Patterns of Violence and Their Consequences for Civilians

Pattern of violence	Identified characteristics	Targets/affected groups	Main consequences
Shootings and killings	Recurrent in conflict documentation	Security personnel and civilians	Deaths, injuries, and fear
Burning/destruction of facilities	Targeting facilities used by communities	Communities and service providers	Damage to facilities and disruption of services
Hostage-taking	Coercion and restriction of liberty	Healthcare workers, teachers, and other individuals	Intimidation and disruption of essential services
Intimidation/threats	Psychological pressure and threats to safety	Civilian population	Fear and restriction of activities
Displacement due to threats of violence	Communities leaving unsafe areas	Residents of conflict-affected areas	Displacement and loss of access to services

Source: Processed from the research findings, 2026

Civilian Victimization

The analysis indicates that civilian victimization occurs through two pathways. The first is direct victimization in the form of death, physical injury, threats, intimidation, and trauma resulting from exposure to violence. The second is indirect victimization, which occurs when conflict disrupts economic activities, education, healthcare services, mobility, and the fulfillment of basic needs.

The findings indicate that communities in conflict-affected areas face security uncertainty that affects their daily activities. Threats of shootings, armed conflict, and the possibility of becoming victims cause some community members to restrict their work, schooling, and economic activities. Under certain circumstances, insecurity compels residents to leave their places of residence and seek areas perceived to be safer.

Displacement broadens these forms of victimization. People who leave their homes face not only the loss of shelter but also the loss of employment and access to education, healthcare, and social services. The research documents also indicate limited access to food, clean water, clothing, adequate shelter, and healthcare services under displacement conditions. Women, children, and older persons are identified as groups facing particular vulnerabilities.

Impacts on Security and Social Life

The first dimension that consistently emerges is the disruption of security. Armed violence creates fear and uncertainty among communities in affected areas. The research documents record shootings, hostage-taking, the burning of facilities, and attacks against civilians as forms of violence that disrupt everyday social activities.

Security impacts are also associated with public services. Schools, healthcare facilities, roads, and government facilities are documented as having been disrupted or damaged in conflict-affected areas. In some cases, healthcare workers and educators have left areas considered unsafe. These findings demonstrate a chain of relationships among violence, insecurity, the reduced presence of service providers, and declining community access to essential services.

Economic Impacts

The documentary analysis identifies four prominent economic consequences: disruption of livelihoods, distribution of goods, economic infrastructure, and business activities. Insecurity restricts population mobility and hinders people from carrying out their work. The research documents indicate that trade, distribution of goods, and transportation are disrupted in conflict-affected areas. Distribution constraints also affect access to basic necessities.

Further economic impacts are evident in the reduced ability of communities to conduct trade, agricultural, and service activities under normal conditions. The study also identifies damage to roads, public facilities, transportation infrastructure, schools, and healthcare facilities as factors that intensify barriers to economic activities and public services.

These findings demonstrate that economic impacts do not occur independently. Economic disruption is directly associated with security conditions, infrastructure damage, and population displacement. Because this study uses documentary analysis and does not directly measure household income, the economic findings are treated as documented patterns of impact rather than quantitative estimates of the magnitude of economic losses.

Impacts on Education

The education sector is one of the essential services directly affected by the conflict. The analysis identifies six forms of disruption: suspension of teaching and learning activities, damage to educational facilities, psychological trauma among students, reduced availability of educators, loss of access to education, and the risk of school dropout. Schools in conflict-affected areas cannot always operate normally because of security threats. Some educators have also left conflict-affected areas due to safety concerns.

These impacts also have a psychological dimension. The documents analyzed record fear and anxiety among children resulting from exposure to violence. These conditions are associated with difficulties in concentration and disruptions to learning activities. Among displaced communities, access to education is also disrupted because children are not always able to attend school regularly while living in displacement settings.

Thus, educational disruption does not result solely from physical damage to schools. Insecurity, population displacement, the reduced availability of educators, and psychological distress collectively create barriers to the continuity of education in conflict-affected areas.

Humanitarian Impacts

Humanitarian impacts represent the broadest accumulation of the identified patterns of violence. The documentary analysis identifies six principal forms: fatalities, displacement, psychological trauma, disruption of healthcare services, deterioration in quality of life, and disruption of the fulfillment of the population's fundamental rights.

Displacement is one of the findings that connects these various dimensions. When people leave their homes because of threats of violence, they may simultaneously lose employment and access to education, healthcare, housing, and social networks. This situation places women, children, older persons, and individuals requiring healthcare services among groups facing greater vulnerability.

The analysis also identifies disruptions to healthcare services. Healthcare facilities in several areas are unable to operate optimally, and some healthcare workers have left conflict-affected areas due to safety concerns. Consequently, communities experience difficulties in obtaining medical services, particularly individuals who require continuous healthcare or emergency treatment, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Matrix of the Impacts of Violence on Civilians

Dimension	Main Findings	Consequences for Civilians
Security	Threats of violence, shootings, intimidation, and instability	Fear, trauma, restrictions on activities, and displacement
Economy	Disruptions to trade, employment, transportation, and distribution	Loss or decline of livelihoods and constraints on access to basic needs
Education	Disruption of schooling, damaged facilities, and teachers leaving affected areas	Loss of access to education and risk of school dropout
Health	Disruption of healthcare facilities and reduced availability of healthcare workers	Limited access to medical services
Humanitarian	Deaths, injuries, displacement, and trauma	Deterioration in quality of life and increased vulnerability
Basic Services	Disruption of education, healthcare, and public facilities	Limited fulfillment of basic needs and fundamental rights

Source: Processed from the research findings, 2026

Relevance of Patterns of Violence to the Elements of Crimes Against Humanity

Table 3 shows that the analysis of the relevance to crimes against humanity produces more limited findings than those concerning victimization. The research documents indicate acts involving the killing of civilians, intimidation, threats resulting in population displacement, and the destruction of facilities affecting civilian populations. The documentary analysis also identifies recurrent acts and indications of patterns of attack within the conflict documentation.

However, the findings do not provide a sufficient basis for concluding, as a matter of law, that all of these patterns constitute crimes against humanity. The documentary data demonstrate the relevance of several acts to conduct elements that may form part of crimes against humanity, but such classification remains dependent on the establishment of more stringent contextual elements. In particular, this study does not provide sufficient primary evidence to independently establish the existence of an organizational policy, the connection of each incident to such a policy, the individual perpetrators' knowledge, or the overall scale of the attack.

These findings are consistent with the evidentiary limitations applied in the research design. The research documents indicate that not every act of violence automatically satisfies the elements of crimes against humanity and that evidence is required to establish the existence of a pattern or policy specifically directed against a civilian population.

Table 3
Analytical Matrix of Relevance to the Elements of Crimes Against Humanity

Documentary Findings	Relevant Elements to Be Examined	Status Based on the Research Data
Killing/shooting of civilians	Acts directed against a civilian population	Relevance identified
Recurrent acts of violence	Pattern/course of conduct	Indication of a pattern identified
Threats associated with population displacement	Forcible transfer/displacement of population	Relevance requires further examination
Recurrent intimidation of civilians	Persecution/inhumane acts	Relevance requires examination of additional elements
Impacts across several conflict-affected areas	“Widespread” element	Insufficient for a legal determination based on this study
Indications of planned and recurrent acts	“Systematic” element	Documentary indications identified; further evidence is required
Organizational policy directing attacks against civilians	Contextual element	Cannot be independently established
Individual perpetrators' knowledge of the attack	Knowledge element	Not assessed at the individual level

Source: Researchers' analysis based on the research corpus, 2026

Overall, the analysis demonstrates a consistent chain of impacts. Armed violence generates insecurity and direct victimization. Insecurity subsequently restricts mobility, employment, education, and access to healthcare services. Under more severe conditions, threats of violence contribute to population displacement. Displacement, in turn, broadens the scope of victimization as communities lose access to housing, livelihoods, education, healthcare, and basic necessities. These findings demonstrate that the consequences of violence for civilians are interconnected and cannot be strictly separated into security, economic, educational, and humanitarian impacts.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that armed violence in Papua constitutes a multidimensional criminological issue. Patterns of shootings and killings, the burning or destruction of public facilities, hostage-taking, intimidation, and threats associated with population displacement indicate that the consequences of violence extend beyond direct victims. Violence also generates indirect victimization through disruptions to security, economic activities, education, healthcare services, and the fulfillment of basic needs. These findings demonstrate that the analysis of KKB needs to move beyond the identification of perpetrators

and forms of criminal conduct. Criminological analysis needs to explain the structural conditions that shape the conflict, the social processes that enable violence to persist, and the consequences experienced by civilians.

Armed Violence from the Perspective of Conflict Theory

The findings concerning recurrent violence can be understood through *Conflict Theory* by situating crime and violence within broader relationships involving power, resource distribution, marginalization, and social inequality. The conflict perspective does not view criminal conduct solely as the result of individual decisions. Social structures and the distribution of power also influence the development of conflict and responses to behavior defined as criminal. In the context of Papua, this perspective is relevant because the conflict occurs alongside issues of development, inequality, identity, political representation, and relations between communities and the state.

This interpretation is consistent with Chauvel (2021), who situates the Papuan conflict within the relationships among armed resistance, political struggle, and international advocacy. Chauvel demonstrates that armed resistance in Papua is local and sporadic, while the state's security response also shapes the dynamics of violence and the development of the conflict. Therefore, the violence cannot be adequately analyzed if it is treated merely as a series of separate individual criminal acts. The conflict has broader political and social dimensions that shape the relationships among armed groups, civilians, and the state.

This structural dimension is also supported by Pamungkas et al. (2022). Their study demonstrates that development policies in Papua have not always been perceived positively by Indigenous Papuans and identifies marginalization as an important issue in their experiences of development. Rumkabu (2022) similarly demonstrates that *top-down* development models, experiences of discrimination, human rights issues, and political aspirations are associated with the formation of identity and resistance in Papua.

Within the framework of *Conflict Theory*, these findings do not imply that inequality or marginalization automatically causes violence. The relationship is considerably more complex. Inequality provides structural conditions that may intensify perceptions of injustice when combined with experiences of discrimination, political conflict, weak trust in institutions, and group mobilization. Accordingly, Conflict Theory is more appropriately used to explain the social context that enables conflict to develop than as a justification for violent conduct.

The findings of this study extend previous research in one important respect. While Pamungkas et al. (2022) and Rumkabu (2022) primarily emphasize the relationships among development, marginalization, identity, and resistance, the present study demonstrates the criminological consequences that emerge once violence occurs. Violence does not operate solely as a manifestation of vertical conflict. It also creates new social conditions characterized by insecurity, displacement, disruption of education, limited access to healthcare services, and economic pressure. Thus, a circular relationship may develop:

structural conditions contribute to the conflict environment, while the conflict subsequently exacerbates the social conditions that previously constituted sources of tension.

Learning Violence from the Perspective of Differential Association Theory

The findings concerning recurrent violence, group solidarity, internal communication, and indications of coordination can also be interpreted through *Differential Association Theory*. Sutherland (1947) explains that criminal behavior is learned through interaction with others. This process includes learning techniques, motives, rationalizations, attitudes, and definitions favorable or unfavorable to violations of the law. Therefore, involvement in crime does not arise solely from individual characteristics but may develop through intensive social relationships.

In the context of this study, the theory helps explain how the group environment may sustain patterns of violence. When individuals interact intensively with groups that legitimize the use of violence, definitions favorable to violence may become more dominant than definitions opposing it. The frequency, duration, priority, and intensity of these relationships are important in this process.

Contemporary criminological literature on recruitment into organized crime supports the relevance of this mechanism. Calderoni et al. (2022) demonstrate that *Differential Association Theory* and *Social Learning Theory* identify social relationships as an important factor in recruitment into criminal groups. Organized crime is embedded within relational environments, meaning that social networks can facilitate contact, learning processes, and involvement in groups. These findings are important to the present study because they help explain that the persistence of violent groups depends not only on formal structures but also on social relationships that enable the transmission of violent norms and practices.

A similar analysis was applied by Armstrong and Matusitz (2013) to a non-state armed group in a different context. They demonstrate that group interaction can function as a means of learning skills, tactics, symbols, and justifications for violence. Their study cannot be directly transferred to the Papuan context because the historical, political, social, and organizational characteristics differ. Nevertheless, its theoretical mechanism strengthens the argument that group interaction can serve as a medium through which violent behavior is learned.

Recent research on armed organizations also indicates that combatant socialization processes require more specific analysis. Ju (2024), for example, demonstrates that recruitment patterns and internal socialization processes can influence cohesion and the behavior of members of armed organizations. This finding emphasizes that the existence of a group alone is insufficient to establish a particular learning mechanism. Recruitment patterns, relationships among members, sanction systems, socialization processes, and organizational contexts need to be understood.

This limitation is highly relevant to the present study. The data used are derived from secondary documents rather than interviews with members or former members of the groups. Therefore, this study

cannot directly establish that every KKB member learns violence through a particular differential association mechanism. *Differential Association Theory* in this study functions as an interpretive framework for explaining patterns identified in the documentary evidence, rather than as causal evidence of the psychosocial processes experienced by each individual.

Civilian Victimization and the Cascading Effects of Conflict

One important contribution of this study lies in the identification of two layers of victimization. The first is direct victimization, which includes death, injury, threats, intimidation, hostage-taking, and trauma. The second is indirect victimization, which occurs when violence disrupts education, healthcare, employment, transportation, the distribution of goods, and public services. This distinction is important because the number of direct victims does not fully capture the social burden of a conflict.

From a victimological perspective, victims of conflict are not limited to individuals directly targeted by attacks. Victims' families, children who lose access to schooling, patients who lose access to medical services, communities that lose their livelihoods, and residents who are forced to leave their homes also experience the consequences of victimization. Accordingly, the unit of victim analysis needs to be expanded from individual victims to affected communities.

The study by Sucitrawan et al. (2024) supports the importance of the civilian protection dimension in responses to KKB in Papua. Their study places KKB actions and law enforcement responses within a human rights protection framework. This perspective is relevant to the findings of the present study because civilian security depends not only on the cessation of attacks but also on the capacity of institutions to maintain access to essential services and protect the rights of communities during conflict.

The findings of this study indicate that displacement serves as a mechanism connecting various forms of victimization. Security threats lead to population displacement. Displacement can subsequently reduce access to employment, schools, healthcare services, housing, and social networks. Under such circumstances, a single security incident can simultaneously generate multiple social consequences.

This pattern of findings is understood in this study as *cascading victimization*, an analytical proposition describing how direct victimization resulting from violence can develop into secondary harms across multiple areas of life. The term is used as an interpretive device for the findings of this study and is not intended to establish a new theory of victimology. Violence generates insecurity; insecurity restricts mobility; restricted mobility disrupts economic activity and public services; and disruptions to services increase community vulnerability. This pattern explains why the consequences of conflict may persist beyond the violent incidents themselves.

Conflict, Education, and the Reproduction of Social Vulnerability

Educational disruption occupies a particular position in the findings because its effects may extend beyond the period of conflict. School closures or disruptions, damage to educational facilities, teacher displacement, trauma among children, and population displacement can reduce the continuity of learning. These conditions not only result in short-term learning loss but may also increase social vulnerability if they persist over the long term.

This finding becomes more significant when situated within the context of education in Papua, which has already faced structural disparities. Human Rights Watch (2024) reports significant literacy problems and educational inequalities in Papua and associates them with issues concerning investment in human resources and discrimination. Although that report differs in scope and methodology from the present study, the information indicates that conflict-related educational disruption occurs within an environment that had already faced challenges in educational access.

From a criminological perspective, these conditions may interact with the mechanisms described by *Differential Association Theory*. When educational institutions and formal social controls weaken, informal social environments may exert relatively greater influence over the formation of values and behavior among younger generations. However, this study finds no direct evidence that children who lose access to education subsequently join armed groups. Therefore, this relationship must be treated as a theoretical implication and a hypothesis for future research rather than as an empirical conclusion.

These findings generate an important theoretical implication. Education is not only a casualty of conflict but may also constitute one of the mechanisms influencing a community's capacity to interrupt the intergenerational reproduction of violence. Therefore, the continuity of education in conflict-affected areas has criminological relevance in addition to its social and developmental functions.

Violence against Civilians and Crimes Against Humanity

The findings indicate that several documented forms of violence are relevant to acts recognized within the framework of crimes against humanity. However, relevance to the conduct elements is not equivalent to satisfaction of all elements of crimes against humanity. Article 7 of the Rome Statute requires a specific contextual setting. The International Criminal Court’s Elements of Crimes explains that such acts must form part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population. The ICC framework also requires the relevant contextual connection to a state or organizational policy and knowledge of the attack by the perpetrator (International Criminal Court, 2011; Kirsch, 2009; Sadat, 2013). Comparative international criminal law scholarship likewise demonstrates the importance of distinguishing the underlying prohibited act from the contextual requirements that transform conduct into a crime against humanity (Kemp & Nortje, 2023). Therefore, the existence of killings, forcible displacement, persecution, or inhumane acts alone is insufficient to establish crimes against humanity.

The findings identify killings or shootings of civilians, intimidation, displacement resulting from threats of violence, and damage to facilities used by communities. Recurrent acts are also identified in the documentary evidence. These findings allow for an examination of the *course of conduct* element and

the possible systematic character of the violence. However, the research corpus does not provide sufficient primary evidence to independently establish the existence of an organizational policy actively promoting attacks against a civilian population, the overall scale of the attack, or each perpetrator's knowledge of the context of the attack.

Such caution is important both methodologically and legally. Sucitrawan et al. (2024) demonstrate that the KKB conflict raises serious concerns regarding the protection of human rights. Meanwhile, the literature concerning the legal treatment of KKB indicates ongoing debate regarding the categories of law, security, terrorism, conflict, and human rights. Because these categories involve different legal elements, classification should not be based solely on the level of violence or the severity of its consequences.

Accordingly, the contribution of this study is not to establish that KKB as a whole has committed *crimes against humanity*. Rather, its contribution lies in developing a criminological-legal matrix that connects documented patterns of violence with the elements that need to be examined when particular conduct is assessed within the framework of crimes against humanity. This position is more consistent with the limitations of documentary-based research while avoiding legal conclusions that exceed the available evidence.

Theoretical Integration: Conflict Structure, Learning of Violence, and Victimization

When *Conflict Theory* and *Differential Association Theory* are applied separately, each explains only part of the phenomenon. *Conflict Theory* helps explain the macro-level environment involving the distribution of power, marginalization, inequality, and conflicts of interest. *Differential Association Theory* explains mechanisms at the meso and micro levels concerning how norms, rationalizations, and practices of violence can be learned through social relationships. The victimological perspective then explains the consequences of violence for individuals and communities.

Integrating these three perspectives produces a more comprehensive analytical model. At the structural level, marginalization, inequality, experiences of discrimination, distrust, and political conflict create an environment of tension. The studies by Pamungkas et al. (2022) and Rumkabu (2022) support the importance of development, marginalization, identity, and experiences of injustice in understanding the Papuan context. At the group level, social interaction can provide a mechanism for transmitting norms and practices of violence, as explained by Sutherland (1947) and the social learning literature on criminal groups. At the level of consequences, violence generates direct and indirect victimization, which may subsequently exacerbate existing social conditions.

Based on this integration, the study proposes the following conceptual pattern: Structural inequality and marginalization → social tension and conflict → group interaction and learning → reproduction of violence → civilian victimization → disruption of services and development → increased social vulnerability.

This relationship is not intended as a deterministic causal model. Not every form of inequality produces conflict, not every individual living in a conflict environment learns violence, and not every group member follows the same process of involvement. Rather, the model represents the conceptual relationships most consistent with the documentary findings and the theories employed in this study.

These findings also explain the analytical limitations of approaches focused exclusively on controlling perpetrators. Law enforcement addresses individual acts and individual responsibility, whereas the conditions that sustain conflict operate at different levels. Conversely, structural explanations should not eliminate individual responsibility for acts of violence. Criminological analysis needs to maintain both levels simultaneously.

Contribution of the Study to the Conflict Criminology Literature

This study makes three principal contributions. First, it integrates structural dimensions and social learning processes to explain armed violence in Papua. Previous studies have predominantly examined the Papuan conflict from political, development, human rights, or security perspectives. This study explicitly situates the phenomenon within a criminological analysis by examining the relationships among conflict structures, group processes, patterns of violence, and victimization.

Second, the study broadens the conceptualization of victims by identifying direct and indirect forms of victimization. The impacts of conflict are assessed not only in terms of deaths and injuries but also through disruptions to education, healthcare, livelihoods, mobility, displacement, and public services. These findings generate the concept of *cascading victimization* as an analytical proposition to explain how one dimension of violence can generate vulnerability across multiple areas of life.

Third, the study establishes a clearer analytical boundary between patterns of violence and the classification of *crimes against humanity*. Identifying acts relevant to Article 7 of the Rome Statute constitutes an initial stage of analysis rather than a legal conclusion. Establishing crimes against humanity requires proof of contextual, material, and mental elements, not all of which are available within the research corpus used in this study. This approach strengthens methodological rigor and reduces the risk of *overclaiming* in documentary-based criminological research.

Overall, the findings indicate that armed conflict in Papua is more appropriately understood as a process operating simultaneously at multiple levels. Structural factors help explain the conflict environment. Group interactions help explain the potential reproduction of violent behavior. Victimology demonstrates how the consequences extend from direct victims to households, public services, and communities. The international legal framework subsequently provides more stringent parameters for determining when patterns of violence may be examined as crimes against humanity. This integration provides a more cautious explanation than approaches that categorize the phenomenon solely as an issue of criminality, security, or political conflict.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that armed violence associated with armed groups in Papua forms patterns whose impacts extend beyond direct victims. The documentary analysis identifies five major forms of violence: shootings and killings, the burning or destruction of public facilities, hostage-taking, intimidation, and threats of violence associated with population displacement. The consequences include direct victimization in the form of death, injury, threats, and trauma, as well as indirect victimization through disruptions to security, livelihoods, education, healthcare services, mobility, and the fulfillment of basic needs. Theoretically, *Conflict Theory* helps explain the structural context underlying the conflict environment, while *Differential Association Theory* provides a framework for understanding the potential reproduction of violent norms and practices through group interaction. Integrating these two perspectives with victimization analysis demonstrates that violence needs to be understood as a process operating simultaneously at the structural, group, and social-consequence levels.

From the perspective of international criminal law, several documented patterns are relevant to specific conduct elements within the framework of crimes against humanity. However, this study does not find sufficient documentary evidence to independently establish the fulfillment of all contextual elements, including the scale or systematic nature of the attack, an organizational policy directing attacks against a civilian population, and the individual perpetrators' knowledge of the attack. Therefore, the findings should be understood as an analytical basis for further examination rather than as a determination of criminal responsibility. Future research should employ a more structured corpus of incidents, triangulation of independent sources, temporal-spatial mapping of incidents, and primary data where security conditions and research ethics permit. Such approaches are necessary to examine more rigorously the relationships among structural conditions, group processes, patterns of violence, and civilian victimization.

Declarations

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data supporting the findings of this study are derived from the 2024 and 2025 Operation Damai Cartenz reports and relevant published academic, legal, institutional, and human rights sources. The Operation Damai Cartenz data document contains information on reported casualties, seized evidence, individuals identified in the reports, and damage to civilian and public infrastructure.

The authors have obtained permission to make the signed Operation Damai Cartenz data document publicly available. Accordingly, the document is provided as Supplementary File S3: Authorized Operation Damai Cartenz Data, 2024–2025, accompanying this manuscript. Additional information concerning the

documentary sources, analytical categories, and data extraction procedures is provided in Supplementary Files S1 and S2. No primary interviews, surveys, or statistical analysis datasets were generated for this study.

The reported figures reflect the information contained in the source documents and have not been independently verified at the individual-incident level. The supplementary materials are made available to facilitate transparency, reproducibility of the documentary analysis, and independent scholarly assessment.

Author Contribution

Author Contributions StatementC.W. conceptualized the study, developed the research design, conducted the literature and documentary analysis, interpreted the criminological findings, and drafted the original manuscript. H.N. contributed to the conceptual framework, analysis of the socio-political and structural dimensions of armed conflict, interpretation of the findings, and critical revision of the manuscript. A.M.M. contributed to the legal analysis, particularly the interpretation of the international criminal law framework and crimes against humanity, and critically reviewed and revised the manuscript. C.W., H.N., and A.M.M. contributed to the integration of the criminological, victimological, and legal perspectives. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to be accountable for the integrity and accuracy of the work.

Data Availability

All data supporting the findings of this study that are available to the authors are included in the manuscript and its Supplementary Information. The study draws on secondary documentary evidence, including the signed 2024 and 2025 Operation Damai Cartenz data document, which contains reported casualties, seized evidence, identified individuals, and damage to civilian and public infrastructure. The authors have obtained permission to share this signed document publicly, and it is provided as Supplementary File S3.Supplementary Files S1 and S2 provide the documentary source inventory, analytical categories, and data extraction documentation. No primary interviews, surveys, or statistical datasets were generated. The reported figures are derived from the available source documents and have not been independently verified at the individual-incident level. Complete underlying operational records not provided to the authors are not included in the Supplementary Information.

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