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Criminal Liability for Child Grooming Operational Patterns in Roblox Online Gaming

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Abstract

General Background: Online gaming platforms create opportunities for social interaction while exposing children to manipulation and technology-facilitated sexual exploitation. **Specific Background:** Roblox communication features, virtual identities, and digital rewards can facilitate grooming through progressive trust-building, isolation, and sexual solicitation. **Knowledge Gap:** Indonesian criminal law does not expressly establish grooming as an independent offense, while recent legislative changes require reassessment of liability across different stages of perpetrator conduct. **Aims:** This study examines grooming methods and criminal liability under Indonesian law following implementation of the National Criminal Code and Criminal Adjustment Law. Normative legal research employed statutory, conceptual, case-based, and comparative approaches, including legislative frameworks from the United Kingdom, Australia, and Singapore. **Results:** The analysis identifies five behavioral stages, from victim selection to further exploitation. Initial contact, trust-building, and isolation generally remain outside criminal liability unless statutory offense elements are satisfied. Sexual communications, coercion, and exploitation may fall under existing sexual violence and criminal provisions. Digital gifts, including Robux, may constitute inducements under Article 417 when the remaining statutory elements are established. Criminal responsibility also differs between adult and juvenile perpetrators. **Novelty:** The study integrates stage-specific offense analysis, virtual reward mechanisms, legislative transitions, and offender age into a comparative legal framework. **Implications:** Explicit grooming provisions could address early-stage regulatory gaps while preserving legality, evidentiary safeguards, and differentiated juvenile accountability.

Highlights:

- Five sequential behavioral phases were identified, beginning with victim selection.
- Preparatory communication generally falls outside existing offenses until relevant statutory elements are met.
- Virtual rewards and offender age create distinct considerations for prosecution and accountability.

Keywords: Child Grooming, Roblox, Criminal Liability, Indonesian Criminal Law, Children.

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Introduction

Changes in information and communication technology have encouraged the formation of new patterns of social relationships that increasingly depend on the use of digital media [1]. Advances in digital technology enable individuals to communicate without the limits of space and time through various internet-based platforms. Children, as part of a society that actively uses digital technology, have also experienced changes in their patterns of interaction, particularly through social media and online games [2].

This technological development has also brought negative impacts in the form of increasing digital-based crime (cybercrime), including sexual crimes against children. Digital spaces have given rise to new forms of sexual crime, such as sexual extortion (sextortion), in which perpetrators use intimate images to coerce and control their victims, often along gendered lines of vulnerability [3]. At the same time, cybercrime poses distinct challenges for criminal law, particularly in proving the offense and identifying the perpetrator, so that legal policy must be designed to keep pace with the misuse of technology [4]. Children are a vulnerable group because of their limited understanding of risks in the digital space and their high intensity of internet use [5]. The rising number of cases affecting children, including those committed through digital platforms, shows that the use of information technology also carries negative consequences. In addition to changing patterns of communication and social interaction, technological development has given rise to new modes of crime with more complex characteristics that are often difficult for the public and law enforcement officials to recognize.

Along with the increasing use of digital technology, various new forms of crime targeting children have emerged, one of which is child grooming. This modus operandi is carried out through a series of approaches and psychological manipulation in the digital space as an initial step toward the sexual exploitation of the victim [6]. It is conducted by systematically approaching children to build trust and emotional closeness, which the perpetrator then uses as a means of sexual exploitation [7]. The process generally takes place gradually, beginning with ordinary communication and developing into a closer relationship through psychological manipulation. These characteristics make child grooming a covert crime that often goes undetected in its early stages, making it difficult to prevent in the absence of adequate legal regulation [8].

The development of online games has further expanded the opportunities for *child grooming*. In practice, perpetrators often use communication features such as chat and voice messages to approach children as potential victims [9]. This pattern has been identified in various studies showing that online games have become a potential social interaction space for perpetrators to build relationships with victims gradually, particularly where games offer private chat and video features [10]. The large number of online game users, particularly among children and adolescents, further increases the potential for such crimes. As an illustration, popular online games in Indonesia may have millions to tens of millions of active users, demonstrating the vast digital interaction space that perpetrators can exploit.

Such cases are not confined to a single platform. Previous research has recorded a number of sexual crime cases through online games widely downloaded by children and adolescents, including Mobile Legends, PUBG, and Free Fire. These cases include a 12-year-old child who was groomed by a 27-year-old man through Mobile Legends and 11 children who were allegedly sexually abused through Free Fire [2]. These data indicate that online games have become a recurring space for crimes against children rather than isolated incidents, so Roblox needs to be examined on the basis of its own platform characteristics.

One of the online gaming platforms widely used by children is Roblox. The platform allows users to create virtual identities, interact with other players, and communicate through chat features in an open digital environment. The ease of disguising one's identity and communicating with other users without knowing their real identities makes Roblox vulnerable to being used as a means of *child grooming*. This vulnerability is reflected in legal action abroad, such as the lawsuit filed by the Louisiana Attorney General in 2025 alleging that Roblox failed to protect children from adult predators [11], as well as in the disclosure of a case involving a child predator from Balikpapan who extorted and sexually threatened a Swedish teenage girl through the Roblox game [12].

At the legal level, the term *child grooming* has not been defined as a distinct criminal offense. Criminal law is essentially the branch of law that regulates acts prohibited by law and the criminal sanctions that may be imposed on any individual who violates them [13]. Conduct with the characteristics of *child grooming* is

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still associated with Article 76E in conjunction with Articles 81 and 82 of the Child Protection Law, Articles 4, 5, and 14 of the Sexual Violence Crimes Law, Article 27(1) of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law, and Articles 417 and 418 of the Criminal Code, with Law Number 27 of 2022 on Personal Data Protection as a supporting instrument [14]. However, these provisions remain broad and do not explicitly regulate *child grooming* as a set of methods and manipulation directed at children to achieve sexual purposes [15].

This normative landscape changed fundamentally on 2 January 2026. Article 622(1)(n) of Law Number 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code (the National Criminal Code) repealed Article 81(1) and Article 82 of the Child Protection Law, while Law Number 1 of 2026 on Criminal Adjustment abolished special minimum penalties outside the Criminal Code and amended several provisions of the Criminal Code itself. As a result, the legal basis that has so far been used in research and law enforcement practice against grooming needs to be reexamined. The consequences of these changes for grooming offenses, including the status of the aggravation clauses in Article 81 and the replacement of Article 82, are analyzed in Section III.

The development of technology accompanied by the increasing incidence of *child grooming* shows the need for a more adaptive legal response to provide effective protection for children in the digital space [15]. Criminal liability is essentially a mechanism for imposing sanctions on a person for an act that fulfills the elements of a criminal offense and for which that person can be held legally accountable [16]. Criminal liability for *child grooming* perpetrators still faces obstacles because Indonesia adheres to the principle of legality as set out in Article 1(1) of the Criminal Code. This principle is a fundamental principle of the rule of law that limits punishment to what is established by law while protecting the rights of citizens [13].

At present, child grooming is not regulated as a standalone criminal offense in Indonesian positive law. Its regulation remains scattered across various laws and regulations, creating a gap between the development of technology-based sexual crimes and the applicable legal norms. As a result, law enforcement against such conduct still depends on the interpretation of existing criminal provisions. On this basis, this study examines the law and criminal liability applicable to perpetrators who use the Roblox game as a modus operandi.

Previous research has approached grooming from several angles, yet each study leaves part of the problem open. One previous study on grooming offenses against children in Indonesia found that the statutory basis for prosecuting grooming remains scattered across several laws and does not explicitly regulate grooming as a method of manipulating children [15]. Another previous study emphasized the urgency of regulating child grooming as a specific norm in the Indonesian legal system [17]. However, both studies were conducted before the National Criminal Code came into force and did not test how specific provisions apply to the concrete stages of grooming. A previous study on grooming in the online game Mobile Legends went further by applying the elements of criminal liability and concluded that offenders can be held liable even before physical contact occurs [2]. That study, however, assessed the grooming sequence as a single punishable whole and still relied on Article 82 of the Child Protection Law, which has since been repealed. Other previous research examined children's right to legal protection from sexual violence in cases of grooming through online games [6]. A similar focus appears in a previous study on legal protection for child victims of grooming in Bandar Lampung, which addresses protection and recovery rather than the liability of the offender [18]. Meanwhile, a previous study on Roblox found that perpetrators use private chat, voice features, and Robux to build manipulative relationships with children [19]. Another previous study identified grooming, sextortion, and virtual groping as forms of sexual violence against children on online game platforms [20]. Previous research has also addressed the prevention of sexual content on Roblox from a legal and religious perspective [21]. None of these studies, however, translates those findings into a stage-by-stage analysis of criminal liability.

Three gaps therefore remain. First, no study has reassessed the liability of groomers under the regime created by the National Criminal Code and the Criminal Adjustment Law. Second, earlier work does not distinguish which stages of grooming are punishable and which remain preparatory, a distinction that determines whether the law can intervene before a child is sexually harmed. Third, the possibility that groomers on a platform dominated by young users are themselves children, and the consequences of this under the juvenile justice system, has not been examined.

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Departing from these issues, this study examines the modus operandi of child grooming through the Roblox game and the criminal liability of its perpetrators under Indonesian criminal law. The research focuses on the relationship between the characteristics of interaction on Roblox, the stages of the perpetrator's conduct, the elements of criminal liability, and the application of positive law after the entry into force of the National Criminal Code. The results are expected to clarify the application of criminal provisions while supporting the development of a more adaptive legal framework for sexual crimes against children in the digital space.

Against these gaps, this study makes four contributions that go beyond a change of platform. First, it reexamines the basis of criminal liability after the entry into force of the National Criminal Code and the Criminal Adjustment Law, including the consequences of the repeal of Article 82 of the Child Protection Law and the shift of the reference of Article 81(2) of the Child Protection Law to Article 473(4) of the Criminal Code. Second, it tests each stage of grooming separately against the formulation of offenses, thereby identifying precisely where criminal liability begins. Third, it places the distinctive features of Roblox, particularly the use of Robux and virtual items, within the element of "giving or promising to give a gift" under Article 417 of the Criminal Code, and distinguishes the liability of adult and child perpetrators. Fourth, it compares Indonesian regulation with standalone grooming offenses in the United Kingdom, Australia, and Singapore to derive concrete elements for a future Indonesian grooming offense.

Accordingly, there are two issues to be addressed in this study. The first concerns how grooming operates on Roblox and the extent to which each of its stages intersects with the formulation of offenses in positive law. The second concerns the basis and form of the perpetrator's criminal liability under the National Criminal Code regime. The research questions are therefore: (1) what is the modus operandi of child grooming through the Roblox game from the perspective of Indonesian criminal law; and (2) how is criminal liability imposed on child grooming perpetrators who use the Roblox game as a modus operandi under Indonesian criminal law. In line with this, the study aims to analyze the modus operandi of child grooming through the Roblox game from the perspective of Indonesian criminal law and to analyze the criminal liability of its perpetrators, both adults and children, after the entry into force of the National Criminal Code and the Criminal Adjustment Law.

Method

The research method used in this paper is normative legal research. In his analysis of legal research, Soerjono Soekanto distinguishes two types of legal research, namely normative legal research and empirical legal research [22]. Normative legal research aims to analyze and understand the legal norms and regulations applicable to the criminal liability of *child grooming* perpetrators who use the Roblox game as a modus operandi. This study examines legal issues through the review of legal sources, including laws and regulations, court decisions, legal theories, doctrines, and expert opinions relevant to the research topic, and is therefore conducted through library research or document study.

Four approaches are used. The statute approach examines the provisions related to *child grooming*, child protection, sexual violence, electronic information, and criminal liability, namely the Criminal Code, the Child Protection Law, the Sexual Violence Crimes Law, the Electronic Information and Transactions Law, the Juvenile Criminal Justice System Law, and the Personal Data Protection Law. The conceptual approach examines the concepts of *child grooming*, modus operandi, preparation and attempt, fault, and criminal liability, including the monistic and dualistic doctrines of criminal liability. The case approach examines court decisions in order to understand how criminal provisions are interpreted and applied to sexual offenses against children committed through digital platforms. The comparative approach examines the regulation of grooming in the United Kingdom, Australia, and Singapore. These three jurisdictions were selected because each has formulated grooming as a standalone offense, each represents a different legislative model (an offense based on a meeting, an offense based on communication, and an offense combining prior contact with a step toward a meeting), while comparative study has also been used in Indonesian scholarship to evaluate legal protection against the online sexual abuse of children [23].

The legal materials used in this study consist of primary and secondary legal materials. Primary legal materials include laws and regulations and relevant court decisions, while secondary legal materials include legal books, scientific journals, legal articles, doctrines, and the opinions of legal scholars related to the research topic. The collected legal materials are analyzed qualitatively using a descriptive-analytical method, by describing the applicable legal provisions and concepts and then analyzing their application to

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the modus operandi of *child grooming* through the Roblox game and the criminal liability of its perpetrators.

Legal materials were collected in three steps. First, legislation was retrieved from official legal databases (JDIH) in its latest consolidated form as of October 2026. Second, court decisions were searched in the Supreme Court Decision Directory and in peer-reviewed studies using the keywords "*child grooming*", "online game", "Roblox", and "electronic-based sexual violence". Decisions were included if they (a) concerned sexual offenses against children or electronic-based sexual violence, (b) involved conduct carried out through an online game or digital platform, and (c) were decided after the Sexual Violence Crimes Law came into force in 2022. On this basis, Decision Number 419/Pid.Sus/2023/PN Tjk was examined; no published Indonesian decision specifically concerning grooming on Roblox was found during the search. Third, secondary materials were selected from journal articles published between 2021 and 2026, supplemented by verified news reports only for factual information on cases.

The materials were analyzed in three stages. Statutory provisions were first interpreted grammatically and systematically. Each stage of the grooming modus operandi was then matched against the elements of the relevant offenses and assessed under the dualistic structure of criminal liability adopted by the National Criminal Code. Finally, the comparison with foreign law was conducted functionally, using three criteria: the point at which criminalization begins, whether a physical meeting is required, and the age threshold and treatment of child perpetrators.

The primary legal materials in this study are arranged according to hierarchy and chronological order of enactment, namely the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia; Law Number 23 of 2002 on Child Protection as amended by Law Number 35 of 2014 and most recently by Law Number 17 of 2016; Law Number 13 of 2006 on Witness and Victim Protection as amended by Law Number 31 of 2014; Law Number 11 of 2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions as last amended by Law Number 1 of 2024; Law Number 11 of 2012 on the Juvenile Criminal Justice System; Law Number 12 of 2022 on Sexual Violence Crimes; Law Number 27 of 2022 on Personal Data Protection; Law Number 1 of 2023 on the Criminal Code; and Law Number 1 of 2026 on Criminal Adjustment.

Results And Discussion

A. Modus Operandi of Child Grooming through the Roblox Game from the Perspective of Indonesian Criminal Law

1. Characteristics of the Roblox interaction space

Roblox is not merely a single game but a platform containing millions of user-created game worlds. Users create avatars, join servers with strangers, make friends, and communicate through chat features. A previous study on child Roblox users notes that this open interaction exposes children to psychosocial risks, particularly when family digital literacy is low [5]. The platform also has a virtual currency, Robux, which can be purchased with real money and used to buy items, avatar accessories, or access to certain games. Previous research on grooming in Roblox found that perpetrators exploit chat features, voice features, and Robux to build manipulative relationships with children [19]. These three characteristics, namely identity anonymity, open interaction with strangers, and the economic value of virtual items, therefore become the means exploited by perpetrators at every stage of grooming.

2. Stages of the modus operandi

Based on the literature, the modus operandi of grooming in the digital space generally proceeds through several stages, namely friendship forming, relationship forming, risk assessment, exclusivity, and the sexual stage. Studies in the context of online games describe a similar pattern, namely manipulation, access to the victim, building closeness, risk assessment, identity disguise, and sexual context [5]. In the context of Roblox, these stages can be formulated as follows.

The first stage is victim selection and identity disguise. The perpetrator uses an avatar and username resembling a child or teenager and joins games that are popular among children. The second stage is trust-building, for example by playing together, helping complete missions, sending friend requests, and giving or promising Robux or virtual items. The third stage is isolation, namely moving communication to more private spaces such as private servers or other applications such as Discord and WhatsApp [24], while assessing whether parents monitor the child's activities. The fourth stage is sexualization, when the

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perpetrator begins sending sexually charged messages, requesting photos or videos, or inviting the child to engage in sexual activity via camera. The fifth stage is further exploitation, in the form of sexual extortion (*sextortion*) with threats of distributing content, or invitations to meet in person. The pattern in the Balikpapan case, namely acquaintance through an online game, a special relationship, the exchange of sexual content, and then extortion, demonstrates all of these stages in a single sequence.

This pattern is supported by empirical and case evidence. A study based on interviews with victims and perpetrators of grooming on Roblox found that perpetrators use private communication, voice features, and Robux to build manipulative relationships before steering children into psychologically and sexually harmful situations [19]. Research on online game platforms in Indonesia likewise identifies grooming, *sextortion*, and virtual groping as recurring forms of sexual violence against children [20]. Abroad, the lawsuit filed by the Louisiana Attorney General alleges that the absence of meaningful age verification allows adults to pose as children on Roblox, while Roblox itself reported submitting 1,200 reports of potential child exploitation to the U.S. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in the first half of 2025 [11]. In the Philippines, a 19-year-old was arrested in 2026 for allegedly offering Robux in exchange for sexual images and sexual activity from minors, including a 10-year-old girl he had befriended on Roblox [25]. This last case shows concretely that Robux can function as a gift in the grooming process, which is directly relevant to the element of "gift" in Article 417 of the Criminal Code discussed below.

The success of this modus operandi is also supported by three factors, namely digital anonymity that allows perpetrators to pose as teenagers of the same age, low digital literacy among children and parents, and weak monitoring systems on gaming platforms [19]. These three factors are relevant to Roblox, especially as research in Bandar Lampung shows that public awareness of *child grooming* remains low [18]. From the perspective of criminal law, these factors do not eliminate the perpetrator's liability, but they explain why the early stages of grooming are difficult to detect before the child suffers actual harm.

3. Intersection of each stage with the formulation of offenses

Mapping the above stages against positive law shows that not every stage of grooming is punishable. Victim selection, trust-building, and isolation are essentially outwardly neutral acts: playing together, chatting, or giving virtual items. The National Criminal Code distinguishes between preparation and attempt. Article 15 of the Criminal Code treats acts of preparing means, gathering information, or creating conditions for the commission of a criminal offense as preparation, which is punishable only if expressly provided for by law. Meanwhile, an attempt under Article 17 of the Criminal Code requires an intention that has become evident through the commencement of the execution of the intended offense [38]. Because no provision expressly criminalizes preparation for sexual offenses against children, the early stages of grooming on Roblox are difficult to qualify as criminal offenses, even though the perpetrator's sexual intent exists from the outset.

This finding differs from that of Fachri and Harefa, who conclude that grooming in Mobile Legends fulfills the elements of *actus reus* and *mens rea* even before physical contact occurs [2]. The difference lies in the unit of analysis. When the grooming sequence is assessed as a single whole, the sexual purpose revealed at the end colors the earlier acts; when each stage is tested separately against the principle of legality, the trust-building phase has no corresponding offense definition. The stage-by-stage approach adopted here is more consistent with Article 1(2) of the Criminal Code, which prohibits analogy, and it explains why early intervention requires a new offense rather than an expansive reading of existing ones.

Criminal law takes hold only once grooming turns sexual, and several charges then become available. Sending a child sexual messages may amount to non-physical sexual harassment under Article 5 of the Sexual Violence Crimes Law [26] or to electronic-based sexual violence under Article 14(1), which covers transmitting sexual material to a recipient who has not consented to it. When the victim is a child, neither offense depends on a complaint (Articles 7(2) and 14(3) of the Sexual Violence Crimes Law). Demanding sexual images while threatening to spread them, or with intent to mislead, attracts the heavier penalty of Article 14(2), which corresponds to the practice of *sextortion* [3]. Circulating indecent content may also be charged under Article 27(1) jo. Article 45(1) of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law as revised by Law 1/2024, but that offense requires the content to be made available to the public; since grooming usually takes place in private chats, the Sexual Violence Crimes Law is the better fit at this stage.

This qualification is consistent with judicial practice. Syaz in their study of Decision Number 419/Pid.Sus/2023/PN Tjk concerning sexual violence through an online game live-streaming platform,

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conclude that the non-consensual transmission of sexual content can be qualified as electronic-based sexual violence under Article 14 of the Sexual Violence Crimes Law, and that the use of an anonymous account does not remove criminal liability, although it makes proof dependent on electronic evidence and digital forensics [27]. The decision illustrates that courts are already able to reach the sexual stage of online grooming through existing provisions, while confirming that the earlier stages remain outside the reach of the law.

When the perpetrator induces a child to commit an indecent act in exchange for Robux or virtual items, the conduct intersects with Article 417 of the Criminal Code. The elements of this article comprise: (a) any person; (b) giving or promising to give a gift, abusing authority arising from a relationship, or through deception; (c) inducing a person known or reasonably suspected to be a child; and (d) to commit an indecent act or to allow an indecent act to be committed against them, with a maximum imprisonment of 9 years. Robux and virtual items can be interpreted as a "gift" because they have economic value and are obtained with real money, as the Philippine case above demonstrates [25]. Disguising one's identity as a peer may also fulfill the element of "deception". The remaining issue is the interpretation of "indecent act", because the Elucidation of Article 415 of the Criminal Code defines it as sexual contact related to sexual desire [28]. If "contact" is understood as physical touching between the perpetrator and the victim, sexual activity performed by a child in front of a camera at the perpetrator's direction falls into a gray area, making the application of Article 14 of the Sexual Violence Crimes Law more certain.

If grooming progresses to a physical meeting, the perpetrator's conduct may be prosecuted under Article 415(b) of the Criminal Code concerning indecent acts with a person known or reasonably suspected to be a child, or Article 473(2)(b) of the Criminal Code concerning sexual intercourse with a child, which is qualified as rape. In addition, Article 81(2) of the Child Protection Law, which regulates sexual intercourse with a child through trickery, a series of lies, or persuasion, was not expressly repealed by the National Criminal Code. However, because its penalty refers to Article 81(1), which has been repealed, Article 622(6) of the Criminal Code shifts the reference to Article 473(4) of the Criminal Code. This provision is in fact the most suited to the character of grooming, because the elements of "a series of lies" and "persuasion" describe a gradual process of manipulation.

The repeal of Article 82 of the Child Protection Law also changes the legal basis for indecent acts against children. Article 622(1)(n) of the Criminal Code repealed Article 82 in its entirety, so indecent acts previously prosecuted under Article 76E jo. Article 82 are now prosecuted under Article 415(b) or Article 417 of the Criminal Code, and references to Article 82 within the Child Protection Law are replaced by these two articles [28]. For grooming perpetrators on Roblox, Article 417 is more relevant than Article 415(b), because the elements of "gift" and "deception" correspond to the giving of Robux and the disguising of identity as a peer. Because Article 82 has been repealed in its entirety, aggravation for indecent acts against children no longer derives from the Child Protection Law, but from Article 416 of the Criminal Code and the general aggravation provisions in Articles 58 and 59 of the Criminal Code.

4. Matrix of changes in provisions after 2 January 2026

The changes in the legal basis described above are summarized in Table 1. This matrix is important because the *tempus delicti* determines which provision applies. Article 3 of the National Criminal Code provides that if the law changes after an act is committed, the new law applies, unless the old law is more favorable to the perpetrator.

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Table 1. Matrix of changes in provisions relevant to *child grooming*

Provision before 2 January 2026	Status after the National Criminal Code and Law 1/2026	Provision applied
Article 76E jo. Article 82 of the Child Protection Law (indecent acts against children through trickery, lies, or persuasion)	Article 82 repealed by Article 622(1)(n) of the Criminal Code; the prohibition in Article 76E remains	Article 415(b) or Article 417 of the Criminal Code (maximum 9 years' imprisonment)
Article 76D jo. Article 81(1) of the Child Protection Law (sexual intercourse with a child by violence or threat of violence)	Repealed by Article 622(1)(n) of the Criminal Code	Article 473(2)(b) and (4) of the Criminal Code
Article 81(2) of the Child Protection Law (sexual intercourse with a child through trickery, a series of lies, or persuasion)	Not expressly repealed; the penalty reference shifts to Article 473(4) of the Criminal Code (Article 622(6))	Article 81(2) of the Child Protection Law jo. Article 473(4) of the Criminal Code; special minimum abolished by Article VII point 44 of Law 1/2026 (maximum 15 years)
Articles 290 and 293 of the former Criminal Code (Wetboek van Strafrecht)	No longer in force since the National Criminal Code took effect	Article 415(b) and Article 417 of the Criminal Code
Articles 5 and 14 of the Sexual Violence Crimes Law (non-physical sexual harassment; electronic-based sexual violence)	Remain in force; fines adjusted by Law 1/2026	Articles 5, 14, and 15(1)(g) of the Sexual Violence Crimes Law
Article 27(1) jo. Article 45(1) of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (content violating decency)	Reformulated by Law 1/2024; its relationship with Article 622 of the Criminal Code requires attention	Article 27(1) jo. Article 45(1) of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (Law 1/2024)
Article 1(1) of the former Criminal Code (principle of legality)	Replaced by the National Criminal Code	Article 1(1) and (2) of the National Criminal Code

Table 1 shows that the changes after 2 January 2026 do not eliminate the protection of children but move most sexual offenses against children from the Child Protection Law into the National Criminal Code [38]. However, these changes also carry consequences. The maximum penalty for indecent acts against children has decreased from 15 years under Article 82 of the Child Protection Law to 9 years under Article 415(b) and Article 417 of the Criminal Code. The abolition of special minimum penalties gives judges wider discretion in determining the severity of punishment. For grooming that has not yet reached physical contact, these changes do not close the legal vacuum at the early stages, because none of the new provisions criminalizes communication with a child for sexual purposes as a standalone offense.

B. Criminal Liability of Child Grooming Perpetrators Who Use the Roblox Game as a Modus Operandi

1. Elements of criminal liability under the National Criminal Code

The National Criminal Code separates the criminal offense from criminal liability. Doctrinally, this reflects a shift from the monistic view, which treats fault as part of the definition of the offense, to the dualistic view, which separates the objective elements of the act from the subjective elements of the perpetrator [29]. Under the dualistic structure, a person may be punished only if they commit an act that fulfills the formulation of an offense and is unlawful (Article 12 of the Criminal Code), and if they are also at fault. Article 36 of the Criminal Code affirms that a person can only be held liable for a criminal offense committed

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intentionally or through negligence [16]. Sexual offenses against children are intentional offenses, so what must be proven is the perpetrator's intent and capacity to be held responsible. Exceptions to criminal capacity are regulated in Articles 38 and 39 of the Criminal Code concerning persons with mental and/or intellectual disabilities, and Article 40 of the Criminal Code concerning children under 12 years of age. For grooming, the dualistic structure has a practical consequence: showing that the perpetrator's messages or gifts match an offense definition is not sufficient, as the prosecution must also prove that they were directed by a sexual intent toward a person known or reasonably suspected to be a child.

Previous research on grooming through Mobile Legends breaks down the elements of criminal liability into four requirements, namely an unlawful act, fault in the form of intent or negligence, capacity to be held responsible, and the absence of grounds for exemption from punishment [2]. In grooming, unlawfulness derives not only from the formulation of the offense but also from the violation of the child's right to protection from violence as guaranteed by Article 28B(2) of the 1945 Constitution. However, that research still based the sanctions on Article 76E in conjunction with Article 82(1) of the Child Protection Law, with a minimum imprisonment of 5 years and a maximum of 15 years. Since 2 January 2026, that basis can no longer be used because Article 82 has been repealed by Article 622(1)(n) of the Criminal Code, so the liability of grooming perpetrators must be analyzed under Articles 415(b), 417, and 473 of the Criminal Code as described in this study.

In grooming through Roblox, the perpetrator's intent is in fact easy to prove because the conduct is digitally recorded. Chat histories, Robux transactions, friend requests, and moves to other applications show a series of planned acts directed toward a sexual purpose. The element "known or reasonably suspected to be a child" in Article 415(b) and Article 417 of the Criminal Code can also be proven through conversations, for example when the victim mentions their age or school grade, or when the perpetrator deliberately chooses games popular among children. The obstacles lie in proving the identity of the perpetrator behind an anonymous account and in securing electronic evidence before it is deleted, while police units often lack sufficiently trained investigators [30]. This requires cooperation with platform providers, as seen in the disclosure of the Balikpapan case involving Interpol. The electronic evidence that investigators need to secure includes chat histories, communication metadata, proof of virtual gift transfers, and traces of the shift of communication channels from the gaming platform to other applications [27].

2. Criminal liability of adult perpetrators

For adult perpetrators, criminal liability is determined by the stage reached. At the stage of online sexualization, the perpetrator may be prosecuted under Article 5 or Article 14 of the Sexual Violence Crimes Law. Article 15(1)(g) of the Sexual Violence Crimes Law increases the penalty by one-third if the act is committed against a child. At the stage of persuasion with gifts, the perpetrator may be prosecuted under Article 417 of the Criminal Code. At the stage of physical contact, the perpetrator may be prosecuted under Article 415(b) or Article 473 of the Criminal Code. Because grooming consists of a series of acts, the public prosecutor needs to draft a cumulative or subsidiary indictment taking into account the provisions on concurrence of offenses in the National Criminal Code.

Aggravation of punishment may derive from general or specific provisions. In general, Article 58 of the Criminal Code sets out aggravating factors in the form of an official who violates a special official duty or abuses their authority, the use of state symbols when committing an offense, and recidivism, while Article 59 of the Criminal Code limits aggravation to a maximum of one-third of the maximum penalty. Specifically, Article 416 of the Criminal Code aggravates the penalty if an indecent act results in serious injury or death, while Article 473(9) and (10) of the Criminal Code aggravate the penalty if the victim is the perpetrator's biological child, stepchild, or foster child, or if the act is committed jointly. In the context of Roblox, a perpetrator who is a teacher, coach, or manager of a gaming community does not automatically fulfill the aggravating factor of position, unless it can be proven that they abused that position.

Specific aggravation also derives from Article 81 of Law Number 17 of 2016. Article 81(3) increases the penalty by one-third if sexual violence against a child is committed by a person who has a certain relationship with or position toward the victim, or if it is committed jointly by more than one person; Article 81(4) applies the same increase to repeat offenders; and Article 81(5) aggravates the penalty if the act results in more than one victim, serious injury, mental disorder, infectious disease, impairment or loss of reproductive function, and/or death. For perpetrators under paragraphs (4) and (5), Article 81(6) allows

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the public announcement of the perpetrator's identity and Article 81(7) allows chemical castration and the installation of an electronic monitoring device [37]. These provisions did not lapse with the repeal of Article 81(1), because Article 622(6) of the Criminal Code shifts their reference to Article 473(4) of the Criminal Code [28]. They therefore remain relevant for grooming that culminates in sexual intercourse, particularly for perpetrators who repeat their acts against several children met through Roblox, although the special minimum penalty must now be read together with Article I of the Criminal Adjustment Law.

Mitigating circumstances are considered through the sentencing guidelines in Article 54(1) of the Criminal Code, including the attitude and actions of the perpetrator after committing the offense, the perpetrator's life history, the effect of the punishment on the perpetrator's future, and forgiveness from the victim and/or their family. The author argues that forgiveness from the victim's family must be weighed carefully in grooming cases, because the manipulative relationship between the perpetrator and the child may continue outside the judicial process. This consideration is in line with Article 23 of the Sexual Violence Crimes Law, which prohibits the settlement of sexual violence cases outside the judicial process, except for child perpetrators.

Liability should also serve the victim's recovery. Under Article 16 TPKS Law, judges must fix restitution whenever the sexual violence offense carries four or more years' imprisonment [31], and a child victim's claim to restitution is further secured by Article 71D CPL and Article 7A of the Witness and Victim Protection Law. Early prosecutions under the new KUHP show that a charge under Article 415(b) KUHP can be paired with a restitution claim for the child [32]. Liability for grooming therefore extends beyond imprisonment to repairing the child's material and non-material losses.

3. Criminal liability of child perpetrators

The character of Roblox as a platform dominated by young users opens the possibility that grooming perpetrators are themselves children, in which case Book One of the KUHP and Law 11/2012 on the Juvenile Criminal Justice System (SPPA Law) govern liability [36]. Article 40 KUHP rules out criminal liability for anyone who was not yet twelve when the act occurred. The KUHP frames this as an excuse that removes blame, on the view that a child of that age lacks the emotional, intellectual, and mental maturity to answer for a crime. Such a child can be neither punished nor held in custody; under Article 21 SPPA Law, the investigator, together with a probation officer and a professional social worker, may only return the child to the parents or guardian or place the child in an education and guidance program run by a government agency or social welfare institution for no more than six months [33].
A child who has reached the age of 12 can indeed be held criminally liable, but this does not mean that the child can immediately be sentenced. As long as the child is under 14 years of age, only measures may be imposed, as affirmed in Article 113(3) of the Criminal Code and Article 69(2) of the Juvenile Justice Law. Nor can such a child be detained, because Article 32(2) of the Juvenile Justice Law only permits the detention of children aged 14 years or older who are suspected of committing an offense punishable by imprisonment of 7 years or more. Punishment may only be imposed on children aged 14 to under 18 years, and even then with strict limitations. Imprisonment is used only as a last resort, for a term of no more than half of the maximum penalty for adults, as regulated in Article 81(2) and (5) of the Juvenile Justice Law, while special minimum penalties do not apply to children under Article 79(3) of the Juvenile Justice Law [36].

Diversion must be pursued if the offense is punishable by imprisonment of less than 7 years and is not a repeat offense, as provided in Article 7(2) of the Juvenile Justice Law. Consequently, diversion must be pursued for a child perpetrator charged under Article 14(1) of the Sexual Violence Crimes Law, which carries a maximum penalty of 4 years, whereas a child perpetrator charged under Article 417 of the Criminal Code, which carries a maximum penalty of 9 years, is not subject to mandatory diversion. Article 23 of the Sexual Violence Crimes Law also expressly provides an exception allowing out-of-court settlement for child perpetrators. Drawing this line keeps responses to peer-to-peer grooming restorative while still protecting the interests of the child victim [34].

4. Comparison with regulations in other countries

The difficulty of prosecuting the early stages of grooming in Indonesia contrasts with several countries that have formulated grooming as a standalone offense. The United Kingdom regulates *meeting a child*

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following sexual grooming in section 15 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, which punishes an adult who has communicated with a child under 16 at least twice and then meets, arranges to meet, or travels to meet the child with the intention of committing a sexual offense, with a maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment. Since 2017, the United Kingdom has also criminalized sexual communication with a child under section 15A without requiring a meeting. Australia criminalizes the use of a carriage service to groom persons under 16 in section 474.27 of the Criminal Code Act 1995, with heavy penalties even though no sexual activity has yet occurred. Singapore regulates *sexual grooming of minor below 16 years* in section 376E of the Penal Code 1871, which requires prior communication and a step toward a meeting with the intention of committing a sexual offense.

These three models show that the point of criminalization can be drawn earlier, namely at communication with sexual intent or at steps toward a meeting, rather than waiting for sexual contact to occur. The United Kingdom model under section 15A and the Australian model are the most relevant to grooming on Roblox, because most interactions never progress to a physical meeting yet still cause psychological harm to children. For Indonesia, lawmakers may consider formulating a specific grooming offense that focuses on communication with a child accompanied by sexual intent, while observing the principle of legality, the prohibition of analogy, and differentiated treatment of child perpetrators [17]. Such reform, however, will only be effective if accompanied by stronger enforcement institutions and a supportive legal culture [35].

Conclusion

This study finds that *child grooming* on Roblox proceeds in five stages, from identity disguise and trust-building through Robux and shared play to isolation, sexualization, and exploitation. Tested stage by stage under the dualistic structure of the National Criminal Code, only the sexual stages are punishable, through Articles 5 and 14 of the Sexual Violence Crimes Law and Articles 415(b), 417, and 473 of the Criminal Code; the trust-building and isolation stages remain non-punishable preparation. The study's original contribution lies in three points: it is the first to reassess grooming liability after the repeal of Article 82 of the Child Protection Law and the redirection of Article 81(2) to Article 473(4) of the Criminal Code; it shows that Robux can satisfy the element of "gift" in Article 417; and it demonstrates that child perpetrators on a youth-dominated platform fall under a distinct regime in which those under 12 bear no criminal liability, those under 14 may receive only measures, and diversion is mandatory for offenses carrying less than seven years.

Three specific legal recommendations follow. First, lawmakers should enact a standalone grooming offense that criminalizes communication with a person known or reasonably suspected to be a child, carried out with the intent to commit a sexual offense, without requiring a physical meeting, drawing on section 15A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and section 474.27 of the Australian Criminal Code, with a separate procedure for child perpetrators. Second, the Supreme Court should issue guidance clarifying whether "indecent act" in Articles 415 and 417 of the Criminal Code covers sexual acts that a child performs on camera at an offender's direction, so that Article 417 can be applied consistently to grooming involving virtual gifts. Third, regulations under the Electronic Information and Transactions Law should oblige online game providers to verify user age, retain chat and transaction data for a fixed period, and report suspected grooming to law enforcement. This study is limited by its normative design: it does not rely on field data, and no published Indonesian decision specifically concerning grooming on Roblox was available for analysis. Future research should combine doctrinal analysis with empirical data from investigators, prosecutors, and platform providers.

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