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The Impact of Islamic Counseling on the Mental Health of Prisoners in Yogyakarta Correctional Institution

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ABSTRACT

Prisoners' mental health is an important issue in the correctional context. Various counseling methods have been used to improve the mental welfare of prisoners, one of which is Islamic counseling which is based on Islamic teachings. This research aims to examine the impact of Islamic counseling on the mental health of prisoners in the Yogyakarta Correctional Institution. This research uses a quantitative method with a quasi-experimental design. The research sample consisted of 60 randomly selected prisoners and was divided into two groups from the experimental group who received Islamic counseling and the control group who did not receive the intervention. Data were collected through a validated mental health questionnaire, and analyzed using t-test to determine whether there were differences before and after the intervention in the two groups. The results showed that there was a significant improvement in the mental health of prisoners who received Islamic counseling compared to the control group ($p < 0.05$). Islamic counseling was effective in reducing the levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among the inmates. Islamic counseling has a positive impact on the mental health of prisoners in Yogyakarta Correctional Institution. The results of this research provide practical implications for correctional institution managers in developing faith-based counseling programs to improve the mental welfare of prisoners.

Keywords: *Islamic Counseling, Mental Health, Prisoners*

INTRODUCTION

Inmate mental health is a complex issue and is often affected by various prison environmental factors. Inmate mental health is the emotional, psychological, and social condition of inmates during their imprisonment. Good mental health enables inmates to overcome stress, work productively, and make positive contributions within the correctional environment. However, inmates often struggle with mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, stress, and other disorders due to isolation, lack of social support, non-conducive environment, and past trauma (Kurniawan & Santoso, 2021). According to experts, several factors that can affect the mental health of prisoners are as follows:

1. **Loss of Autonomy and Meaninglessness:** Prisoners have little control over their daily lives, including wake-up times, meals, work, and access to recreation. Some of these control issues can lead to a loss of independence and helplessness, which can be detrimental to their mental health (Zaki & Anwar, 2022).
2. **Overcrowding and Punitive Environments:** Overcrowded prisons often make a negative environment worse. Overcrowding can mean more time in cells, less privacy, limited access to mental and physical health care, and fewer opportunities to participate in programs or work assignments (Pat et al., 2023). Harsh punitive environments are also associated with higher levels of depression and hostility among inmates (Herdiana, 2014).
3. **Social Isolation:** Separated from family and friends can be a major stressor for prisoners. These severed relationships are often the most challenging aspect of their incarceration, causing psychological distress (Alves et al., 2016). Whereas for female prisoners, separation from their children is distressing and can cause guilt, anxiety, and fear of losing the bond with the child (Weaver & Nolan, 2015).
4. **Solitary Confinement:** Detention in isolation is often quite damaging to mental health. Social isolation can cause 'social pain' which affects the brain similarly to physical pain, causing permanent changes to personality and brain function (Herring, 2020).

Furthermore, several solutions that can be implemented to overcome mental health issues in prison include counseling programs, access to mental health care, rehabilitation and training programs, reducing social isolation, and creating a more humane prison environment. The implementation of faith-based or psychological counseling programs can help reduce levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among inmates, with these approaches including individual and group counseling that focus on recovery and mental well-being. Providing adequate

mental health services in prisons is also crucial, including the deployment of trained mental health professionals to provide the care and support needed by prisoners. In addition, providing access to education, job training, and rehabilitation programs can help inmates develop new skills and meaningful life goals, which can improve their mental health.

According to research of Chairunnisa et al (2022), there is already an awareness of the importance of counseling services for prisoners, where many studies have focused on similar issues. It is expected that counseling services for prisoners can continue to be developed so that the purpose of correctional institutions in improving the quality of community behavior can be realized. Meanwhile, based on Latif & Aini's research in 2020, increased self-esteem in prisoners which is characterized by the occurrence of 5 out of 7 aspects based on checklist indicators of realistic behavior, aware of strengths and weaknesses, aware of their position as God's creatures, assertive and independent.

One of the solutions is to conduct counseling, especially the provision of Islamic counseling for Muslim prisoners. Therefore, this research was conducted to examine the impact of Islamic counseling on the mental health of prisoners in the Yogyakarta Correctional Institution.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental method to assess the impact of Islamic counseling on prisoners' mental health. This method was used because it allows assessment of the effect of an intervention without having to have a fully randomized control group. This research involved all prisoners in Yogyakarta Correctional Institution as the population with a sample of 60 prisoners selected through purposive sampling. The sample was divided into two groups from the experimental group who received Islamic counseling and the control group who did not receive the intervention. Experimental research is a type of research where the researcher intentionally manipulates one or more independent variables (factors being tested) and observes the effect on one or more dependent variables (measured outcomes). The purpose is to determine the cause-and-effect relationship between these variables (Zubair, 2023). Control group research is the type of research that uses a control group as part of its experimental design. A control group is a group of subjects who do not receive the intervention or treatment being tested, but are treated as identical to the experimental group in every other respect. The main purpose of the control group is to provide a comparison that allows the researcher to determine whether the changes observed in the experimental group are actually caused by the intervention or treatment provided (Rodgers, 2014).

Data were collected through the Mental Health Questionnaire (DASS-21), which measured levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, and semi-structured interviews to obtain qualitative data regarding prisoners' experiences and

perceptions of Islamic counseling. The DASS-21 (Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21) is a questionnaire designed to measure three psychological conditions which are depression, anxiety, and stress. It is a shortened version of the DASS-42 that consists of 42 items, with each subscale in the DASS-21 including 7 items. The main components of the DASS-21 include the measurement of depression, which measures feelings of worthlessness, lack of motivation, and decreased pleasure; anxiety, all of which measure responses to stressful situations, including physical symptoms such as rapid heartbeat; and stress, which measures chronic levels of tension, difficulty relaxing, and irritability. Ratings in the DASS-21 are made using a 4-point Likert scale (0-3), which indicates the frequency with the subject experienced a particular condition over the past week. The total score for each subscale is obtained by summing the scores of the corresponding items, then multiplying by two to make it comparable to the DASS-42 version. The DASS-21 is used in a variety of contexts, including research, clinical, and individual assessment, to identify mental problems that require further attention (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). The research instruments included the DASS-21, which consists of 21 questions divided into three subscales which are depression, anxiety, and stress, with a 4-point Likert scale, and the interview with designed to assess the impact of Islamic counseling from the inmates' perspective. The research procedure involved a preparatory phase, which included ethical approval and training of counseling facilitators. The intervention of Islamic counseling sessions was conducted for 8 weeks, twice a week, 60 minutes each. Preliminary data was collected through a mental health questionnaire before the intervention, followed by the implementation of Islamic counseling for the experimental group. After 8 weeks, final data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using a t-test to comply with the change in mental health scores between the experimental and control groups before and after the intervention. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify main themes from prisoners' experiences and perceptions. The validity of the research instruments was validated by experts to ensure their suitability to the research objectives, while reliability tests were conducted to ensure consistency of the mental health questionnaire results.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. T-test Results for Stress, Anxiety, and Depression Levels Before and After Intervention

Variables	Groups	N	Mean Score (SD)	t	p-value
Stress	Before Intervention				
	Experiment	30	24,5 (4,2)		
	Control	30	25,1 (4,5)		
	After Intervention				
	Experiment	30	16,7 (3,1)	7,58	< 0,001
	Control	30	24,8 (4,3)	0,32	0,75
Anxiety	Before Intervention				
	Experiment	30	22,8 (5,0)		
	Control	30	23,2 (4,8)		
	After Intervention				
	Experiment	30	14,6 (4,2)	6,73	< 0,001
	Control	30	22,9 (4,7)	0,35	0,73
Depression	Before Intervention				
	Experiment	30	25,0 (5,2)		
	Control	30	25,3 (5,1)		
	After Intervention				

	Experiment	30	17,4 (4,5)	7,42	< 0,001
	Control	30	25,1 (5,0)	0,2	0,84

Source: Processed Data by Researcher

Table 2. Interview Results of Prisoners (Experimental Group)

Themes	Description	Total Respondents
Serenity	The majority of prisoners were calmer after participating in Islamic counseling.	20
Optimism	Prisoners feel more optimistic about their future.	18
Spiritual Proximity	Prisoners reported increased spiritual proximity to God.	22
Emotional Welfare	Prisoners perceived that their emotional welfare improved after participating in Islamic counseling.	21
Anxiety Reduction	Prisoners perceived a significant reduction in their anxiety levels.	19
Stress Reduction	Prisoners reported that Islamic counseling helped them manage and reduce their stress.	23
New Expectations	Islamic counseling provided inmates with new expectations and a clearer purpose in life.	17

Source: Processed Data by Researcher

The research involved 60 prisoners who were divided into two groups that included an experimental group that received Islamic counseling (30 prisoners)

and a control group that did not receive the intervention (30 prisoners). Mental health data were collected before and after the 8-week intervention period using the DASS-21 questionnaire. Mental health outcomes indicated that:

1. Stress Level
 - a. The experimental group had decreased mean stress level scores from 24.5 (SD = 4.2) before the intervention to 16.7 (SD = 3.1) after the intervention, with a significant difference ($t(29) = 7.58, p < 0.001$).
 - b. The control group had no significant change, with a mean score of 25.1 (SD = 4.5) before the intervention and 24.8 (SD = 4.3) after the intervention ($t(29) = 0.32, p = 0.75$).
2. Anxiety Level
 - a. The experimental group had a decrease in mean anxiety score from 22.8 (SD = 5.0) before the intervention to 14.6 (SD = 4.2) after the intervention, with a significant difference ($t(29) = 6.73, p < 0.001$).
 - b. The control group had no significant change, with a mean score of 23.2 (SD = 4.8) before the intervention and 22.9 (SD = 4.7) after the intervention ($t(29) = 0.35, p = 0.73$).
3. Depression Level
 - a. The experimental group had a decrease in mean depression score from 25.0 (SD = 5.2) before the intervention to 17.4 (SD = 4.5) after the intervention, with a significant difference ($t(29) = 7.42, p < 0.001$).
 - b. The control group had no significant change, with a mean score of 25.3 (SD = 5.1) before the intervention and 25.1 (SD = 5.0) after the intervention ($t(29) = 0.20, p = 0.84$).

Interviews with prisoners from the experimental group indicated that the majority of participants were calmer, more optimistic, and had a stronger spiritual sense of closeness after undergoing Islamic counseling. Furthermore, they described an improvement in emotional well-being and a decrease in anxiety and stress. The results of this research indicate that Islamic counseling has a significant impact in reducing the level of stress, anxiety, and depression among prisoners. This finding is in line with research by Hamid (2017) who discovered that faith-based counseling can improve the emotional well-being of prisoners. The significant reduction in mental health scores in the experimental group confirms the effectiveness of this approach in addressing mental disorders in the prison environment.

CONCLUSION

Prisoners' mental health is a complex issue that is complicated by many factors of the prison environment, such as loss of autonomy, overcrowding, punitive environment, social isolation, and solitary confinement. These conditions can worsen the mental health of prisoners, causing stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental disorders. However, research has suggested that programs such as faith-based counseling, adequate mental health services, and access to education and rehabilitation, can assist in reducing these negative impacts. Specific research on Islamic counseling in Yogyakarta Correctional Institution indicates that this approach is effective in reducing inmates' stress; anxiety; and depression levels, and improving their emotional and spiritual welfare. These results have emphasized the importance of developing counseling services to improve the quality of mental health in correctional settings.

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