

FREEDOM IN PRISON: THE TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT OF A PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL INTEGRATIVE THERAPY (PSIT) ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF INCARCERATED PEOPLE

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Abstract

The department of counseling services at Kerobokan Prison, Bali, Indonesia reported to the researcher of this study that some of their inmates experienced psychological complaints which were impacting their physical health. The researcher conducted this study with the aim of providing a means of relief for the inmates, as well as to examine the impact of a Psycho-Spiritual Integrative Therapy (PSIT) as an intervention. A qualitative research method was used with a multiple case study approach with a thematic analysis to determine the influence of the intervention on the participants' sense of life aspiration and psychological well-being. Fifteen male prisoners, who were serving 10 or more years for drug related offenses, completed the PSIT and participated in a post interview. The researcher found 5 main themes related to the participants' experiences over the course of the intervention, which were regret, forgiveness, acceptance, belief, and affirmation. The participant reports indicate the beginning of a transformative change in perspective which may be beneficial for creating a new life for themselves upon their release from prison. Further research is necessary to assess long-term changes in the participants' perspectives, and how they have integrated their awareness for their return to society. The findings of this research may be included into a residential health services module for the counseling services department at Kerobokan Prison, as well they may be influential in further public health research.

Keywords: inmates; prisons; psychological well-being; transpersonal psychology; psycho-spiritual

INTRODUCTION

Health concerns are an impetus for improving health care services, both within and outside of prison. Health security is written into the Indonesian code of correctional institutions (Arrahmania et al., 2021) which states that the health of inmates is protected so that they may integrate back into larger society. According to this stance, correctional institutions are obliged to pay attention to the health of inmates, both physically and mentally, however, prisons in Indonesia have a difficulty in fulfilling this function due to internal factors regarding inmates like overcrowding (Kharlie et al., 2020; Sulistyanta, 2020), radicalism (Asrori et al., 2020; C. Jones, 2014; S. Jones, 2008), lack of

autonomy (Siregar et al., 2019), drug use (Culbert, Waluyo, et al., 2015; Morineau et al., 2012), infection (Culbert, Earnshaw, et al., 2015; Zampino et al., 2015), lack of basic sanitation (Jones, 2014), as well as external factors like facing stigmatization upon reintegrating back into society (Sumpter et al., 2021).

Wildeman and Wang (2017) explain in their research on mass incarceration in the United States that incarceration disproportionately affects the black and minority populations, and while some short-term physical health improvements were found for inmates during incarceration, seriously harmful physical and psychological effects were found upon release. Furthermore, negative health impacts

were found for female partners and children of incarcerated men, with much concern placed on the welfare of communities with a high population of formerly incarcerated individuals. Wildeman and Wang posit the need for “interventions, policies, and practices that could mitigate the harms of incarceration and the post-incarceration period” (p. 1464).

Research conducted by Karnovinanda and Suciati (2014) shows that the prevalence of depression among inmates is 75.4%, with levels ranging from 24.6% reporting no symptoms of depression, 28.7% with mild depression, 38.5% with moderate depression, and 8.2% with major depression. The study was conducted using 151 participants from an unreported prison in Indonesia. It was found that all of the inmates who participated in the survey admitted to experiencing depression (Karnovinanda & Suciati, 2014). A similar case was also found in Kerobokan Penitentiary, which is one of the prisons in Bali. However, inmates were found to not only suffer from depression but a milieu of other psychological disorders. A report approved by the counseling services department at Kerobokan Prison, administered by the Social Division of the Psychological Study Program at Udayana University, found that as many as 73 clients in 2018 complained of physical health issues with possible psychological underpinnings. As many as 69 out of a total of 103 cases were the result of drug abuse, which was found to relate with the inmate’s symptoms of delusion, hallucination, and depression. These psychological symptoms were found to relate to excessive fear, sleep disturbance, feelings of insecurity and guilt, suicidal thoughts, mood disorders, and paranoia. There were 28 cases of adjustment disorders with symptoms including stress, anxiety, anger management problems, social difficulties, as well as other psychosomatic issues. In addition, a total of 6 cases were reported as miscellaneous, requiring further psychiatric and medical treatment.

Wani and Singh (2019) conducted a study on the effects of an Islamic-based psycho-

spiritual integrative therapy in the management of craving, withdraw symptoms, and mental health problems in cannabis users. Using 40 male participants, between the ages of 14 and 37, they found that there was an overall decrease in the scores of the marijuana craving scale and cannabis withdraw scale, specifically related to cannabis use, emotionality, expectancy, compulsivity, purposefulness, withdraw intensity, and the negative impact of withdraw. The intervention included the use of autosuggestion, psychoeducation, repentance, prayer, mindful meditation, and Quran recitation. Furthermore, participants scored less between pre-and post-testing on the mental health scale, specifically for anxiety, depression, loss of behavior/emotional control, general positive affect, emotional ties, and psychological distress. As well, participant scores increased for life satisfaction, psychological well-being, and mental health index.

Kadri et al. (2020) conducted a meta-analysis of studies using a psycho-spiritual-based intervention related to drug addiction recovery and well-being. Ten out of 15 papers related to the effects of such interventions on the frequency, symptoms, and intensity of drug consumption; while 13 papers focused on psychological factors like depression, stress, anxiety, attention, emotionality, and aggression. The findings of the meta-analysis reveal that the psycho-spiritual-based interventions had a significant impact on the cessation of drug and psychological symptoms, especially in regard to stress and anxiety.

Andvig et al. (2021) studied the perception of inmates, and their experiences, on being prepared for release from a Norwegian open prison. The researchers employed a qualitative method through the use of focus groups on 3 different workgroups of men between 20-60 years old. They found three main categories: 1) life outside, 2) working as a community, and 3) useful learning for the future. The inmates reported feeling a greater sense of their own

humanity due to the treatment of staff, as well, they felt that their training related to local democracy, hope for the future, self-reliance, and personal agency were helpful in promoting their preparation for release from prison. The participants also reported on feeling emotionally vulnerable, inadequately prepared for working life upon release, and poor planning for release. The implication of Andvig et al.'s research further supports the need for a human centered approach to inmate rehabilitation as a preparatory measure for reentry into society, as well as the importance of providing a means for inmates to develop greater agency and interpersonal skills for the life outside of prison.

The objective of this study was to determine if there was a transformative change in the perspective of inmates, and for them to describe their experiences, in-depth, before and after therapy. As well, the purpose of this research was to foster a more optimal psychological condition for the inmates so that their overall physical and psychological health could improve. Through developing deeper insight and wisdom, the prisoners may be more likely to integrate their awareness upon returning into the public. Furthermore, it is anticipated that an educational module may be implemented in consideration of this research, which may assist in the health services of Indonesian correctional institutes and future public health policy.

The primary research question for the present study was: what is the transformational impact of a Psycho-Spiritual Integrative Therapy (PSIT) on the psychological well-being of inmates in Kerobokan Prison? The implications of this research beseech for the improvement of psychological services in Indonesian correctional institutions and address the concern for how the psychological conditions of Indonesian inmates can be remedied. Despite the best efforts of the health services department in the prison, the psychological health of inmates remains an ongoing concern.

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, administrators and staff of Kerobokan Prison

had reported a difficulty in implementing the standard practices of the prison in regard to inmate health and security. It is for these reasons that the researchers had to be additionally precautious of how to conduct the study while abiding by the new restricted measures put in place due to Covid-19. The sterilization of equipment, furniture, and the available rooms was necessary prior to interacting with participants. Participants, researchers, and staff also needed to uphold proper physical distancing from each other, as well as wear necessary protective equipment. Despite the challenges of maintaining the novel policies related to Covid-19, the researchers were successful in their implementation of the study.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative research method with a multiple case study approach and thematic analysis. The case study method is a qualitative research method commonly used in exploratory and descriptive research (Yin, 2014). The findings of this study cannot be generalized; however, the case study method offers a way to explore and illustrate the impact of psychological intervention using a Psycho-Spiritual Integrative Therapy (PSIT) technique. This research design employs multiple case studies which are based on the extraction of data using replication (Yin, 2014). When two or more cases were studied, Yin (2014) compared them by conducting two or more experiments, thereby essentially replicating the original cases. Replication of cases like this supports the validity of the clinical method itself, provided that the steps in the therapy are consistent with positive transformative impacts.

Demographics

The research was conducted in Kerobokan Prison, Badung District in Bali Province. The population of this study were male prisoners who were serving 10 or more years for drug related offenses and who reported to have experienced some psychological distress. The researcher selected from a list given by the

clinical administration in Kerobokan Prison 30 inmates with the longest sentence of incarceration. All participants received an informed consent and preliminary interview, however after completing the intervention, only 15 participant responses were recorded in the post-intervention interview because not all of the initial sample completed the intervention process. The participants' ages ranged from 30-35 years old. Participants originally derived from different parts of Indonesia, such as Java, Sumba, Sulawesi, and Bali.

Procedure

The research team conducted a total of seven

visits, once per week, which included an initial visit to screen and interview participants; 5 visits to conduct the psychological interventions, which included meditation, mindfulness, guided imagery, and breath work; as well as a final visit for the post-intervention group discussion and interviews. Ryff's (1989) Psychological Well-being (RYFF PWB) adapted questionnaire, which was translated into Indonesian by the researcher, was used during the screening process in order to inquire upon the participants' psychological condition. As well, the researcher, who has been trained in the PSIT, administered the intervention for the participants.

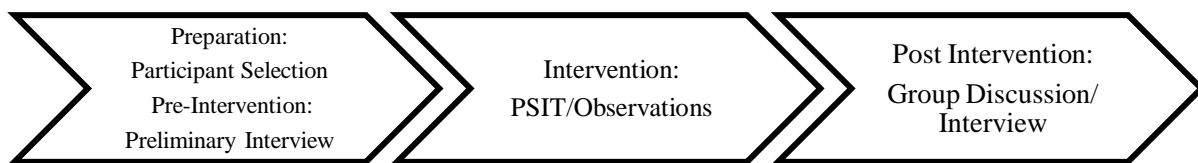


Figure 1. Research Procedure

On the first visit of the intervention, participants received a training in body-scanning guided meditation. Yadav (2017) explains that body-scanning guided meditation is effective for developing concentration and flexibility of attention through moving the mind over different regions of the body to develop an awareness of moment-to-moment experiences. The participants were asked to observe the sensation in their body while receiving a guided meditation by the primary investigator. The objective of the meditation was for the participants to observe their thoughts, feelings, and somatic responses.

On the second visit, the participants received a mindfulness training exercise. Lindsay and Creswell (2016) state that mindfulness is a way of paying attention to the present moment with receptivity and acceptance. The participants were asked to monitor their daily activities, like eating, walking, bathing, or sitting. The objective of the exercise was for the participants to maintain a present awareness of themselves over the course of the day.

On the third visit, the participants received a guided imagery exercise. Bigham et al. (2014) explains that "guided imagery or visualization therapy is a cognitive-behavioral meditation technique in which a person is guided to imagine a relaxing scene or series of experiences" (p. 29). The participants were asked to close their eyes and imagine what was helping or hindering their goals in life. Afterward, they were asked to draw what images came into their minds. The objective of the exercise was for the participants to become aware of their subconscious resistance or beliefs.

On the fourth visit, the participants received a breath work exercise. Aideyan et al. (2020) state that breath work is a way of breathing that allows for greater integration of conscious and unconscious processes. The participants were asked to witness their breath as the primary investigator guided them to breathe in for 4 seconds, hold their breath for 7 seconds, and exhale for 8 seconds. The objective of the exercise was for the participants to maintain an awareness of their breath.

On the fifth visit, the participants received an additional guided imagery exercise in which they were asked to acknowledge their personal helper or hinderer and imagine that they were a flower that was either growing with the aid of their personal helper or shrink with the resistance of their personal hinderer. The objective of the exercise was for the participants to become aware of their subconscious perceptions of limitation and possibility.

Data analysis

Data collection involved using interviews, observations, and group discussions. The researcher also used field notes throughout the process of data collection. The data was organized and analyzed using theoretical coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2012). The overall process was inductive, meaning that it proceeded from specificities to generalities. Firstly, the researcher began by conducting an initial coding, then an axial and selective coding, followed by thematic content analysis from recorded observations and field notes. The overall goal was to create a detailed and comprehensive picture of each participant's transformative experience after participating in the psychological intervention of the Psycho-Spiritual Integrative Technique (PSIT). A cross-case analysis was used to observe similarities and differences amongst participants as the research used a multiple case study approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to describe, analyze, and interpret the transformative impact of a Psycho-Spiritual Integrative Therapy (PSIT) given to male prisoners in Kerobokan Prison, Bali, Indonesia. The results obtained from this research are explained below, which include five themes taken from the participants' experiences, along with brief examples from their interview responses:

Regret

RT: "I started using drugs when I was in high school. While my friends were busy

studying, I could not concentrate. Now, I have ended up here, and am not successful like my friends, so yea, I am a failure."

JN: "I used drugs to boost my confidence, and for showing off. I regret it so much now and have to spend my life here in jail."

LN: "I always used drugs when I was working. It gave me stamina, but I also felt guilty because I knew it is illegal and I kept feeling afraid that the police were looking for me."

AR: "My family are not here with me, they left me. I feel so sad and hate myself for causing these separations."

TY: "I have difficulty sleeping at night. All I think of is how I disappointed my family, especially my father."

Forgiveness

GS: "I know who set me up, so I got caught. In the beginning I was angry, but then I felt that this is the best scenario for me."

SN: "I don't know who I am blaming for my condition, I know this is my fault. It's very difficult to forgive myself, but I am learning, and I feel better now."

TY: "My family abandoned me. My father does not want to talk to me anymore. I have a very hard time forgiving him because I need his support. I know now that I cannot make him accept me, and I need to forgive him."

JN: "Every day I think of my stupidity, but I cannot live with this feeling all of the time. I have to forgive myself and move on."

Acceptance

GS: "I believe in karma, so my situation right now is because of my karma. I cannot escape from my karma."

AR: "I am now enjoying the activities that they have here in prison, that's why I also want to participate in this event. I want to make the best of my time here."

AG: "What else can I do? I cannot fight the guards, the system, I just need to face my punishment."

SY: "I think I am getting used to it here. I have been in prison for 3 years now, and I have 7 years to go. Whether I want it or not, I just have to live day by day."

TY: "No matter how I have tried to contact my family, they just do not respond. Now, I have stopped trying to contact them. If one day they forgive me, they will come to visit me here."

Belief

AD: "I feel more relaxed now after the exercise. I feel calm and optimistic about my future. I can create my world, and especially the flower exercise made me realize that I am the one who either hinders or supports my goals."

SY: "Learning from the exercise, I can start focusing every moment and still be grateful no matter what my situation is. Even if I still have so many years here, but who knows, miracles can happen. I am more hopeful with my condition."

GS: "At first, I could not follow the instructions, but on the second week, I felt like I could feel the sensation in my body and focus more, and I could see many different colors when we were doing the flower exercise. It makes me happy and encouraged again."

AG: "When I participated here on the first day, I just wanted this event to be over soon. I felt so bored and confused because I didn't really know what I supposed to do. But on the second time, the exercise was interesting for me, and I could feel more relaxed, and I enjoyed it more. The third

week, I could see my hopes and dreams, and I felt good just thinking about them."

AR: "My friends pushed me to participate in this event. I didn't really want to do it, but now I can feel the benefit for me. I am learning how to manage my mind and keep strong and keep moving forward."

Affirmation

RT: "If I get out of jail, I want to start my life from zero. I don't want to contact my old friends again, and I just want to focus on my family and my work. I hope I can get a job when I am out of jail."

GS: "I just go with the flow, even though I believe I can make a new karma by doing more good things in the future. I want to start my own business, even it's a small business like a small bar. I want to give all of my energy to that."

AG: "I just want to hug my family. I miss them so much. I will promise them that I will be there for them, and that I will start our life from the beginning. I want them to believe and accept me. I have a strong will that I will make that happen."

TY: "I want to be a different person. I want to change the old me into a new positive person. I will start over and I don't want to experience this again."

SI: "I see myself burning and from it comes a new version of me. I am going to start my life far from where I am from, and start a new life with new friends and just forget about the past. I already burned it away."

The themes indicated convey a transformative change in perspective from regret to affirmation. Mezirow (2008) states that there are 10 phases of perspective transformation: 1) a disorienting dilemma; 2) self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame; 3) a critical assessment of assumptions; 4) recognition that one's

discontentment and the process of transformation are shared; 5) exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions; 6) planning a course of action; 7) acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans; 8) provisionally trying out new roles; 9) building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; 10) a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective.

Moore (2005) elaborates on the first phase of perspective transformation, as:

... a disorienting dilemma – a life event or incident that a person experiences as a crisis that cannot be resolved by applying previous problem-solving strategies. As a result, the person engages in self-examination, often accompanied by unpleasant or undesirable emotions, that leads to critical reflection. (p. 403)

Following the first 5 phases of Mezirow's (2008) theory, it is clear that the participants found themselves in 1) a disorienting dilemma upon becoming incarcerated. The intervention allowed the participants to 2) examine themselves and their situation, which led to them expressing regret. 3) Upon a critical assessment of their assumptions, the participants acknowledged and took responsibility for their choices. 4) They began to forgive themselves, and others, in recognizing that their discontentment and transformation were shared. 5) Then they could begin to accept the possibility of creating new roles, relationships, and actions. Further, they expressed their belief in creating a new life for themselves and affirmed what new values and goals were important to them.

Through receiving the intervention, participants were allowed to gain a greater insight into their own circumstances from a more objective and broadminded perspective. The participants were more willing to see themselves as creators of their own destiny once they could get outside of their own subjectivity. The participants reported that

family as an extrinsic motivator was important in detaching themselves from their current perspectives, which allowed them to see new possibilities. As well, acceptance and self-improvement also were strong indicators of finding a willingness to continue through their time of incarceration, in part, knowing that there can be more to life beyond context. The re-contextualization of meaning and reframing of value systems occurred for the participants through the PSIT, which offered them new insights into an otherwise molded lifestyle. Furthermore, with the added incentive of self-improvement, the PSIT became a newly acquired tool for the participants to employ during the remainder of their incarceration. This approach not only provided short term insights into restructuring their worldviews, but also long-term applications into transforming their autonomy. The participants gained a much-needed breakthrough in the way of renewing their sense of self and identity, which may continue to evolve through their continued self-exploration. It is with these considerations that future research is necessary in order to follow-up on the long-term changes of the participants since receiving the intervention.

The duration of the study is a limiting factor, in that, it is unclear how the participants further transformed in their perspectives, which would involve 6) planning a course of action, 7) acquiring knowledge and skills, 8) trying new roles, 9) building competence and confidence, and 10) reintegration into one's life. It is necessary to address how the intervention allowed the participants to continue their perspective transformation until reintegration, so as to support their return to society.

In a study conducted by Suarez et al. (2014), inmates who received mindfulness training, which is part of a transpersonal-based psychotherapy, were found to have a lower rate of recidivism compared with those who did not receive mindfulness training. Further, it was found that participants reported an improvement in their emotional regulation

and feelings of love for others. Surrey and Kramer (2013) explain that mindfulness is a practice that promotes awareness towards how information is processed and influences one's character. Mindfulness is a capacity to be one hundred percent with oneself. This fully conscious energy allows the individual to recognize any presence (Hanh, 2012), and is the capacity for recognizing, embracing, and caring for negativity. Many studies have shown that mindfulness or mindfulness-based therapies help develop effective emotional regulation (Corcoran et al., 2010). Most people feel problematic emotions because of strong and painful memories or traumas which they do not know how to process (Hanh, 2012). Transpersonal psychotherapy teaches inmates to return to themselves and bring forth conscious energy that protects the individual. Emotions may still be present, but they do not take over the individual's behavior (Hanh, 2012). In addition, being mindful can reduce spontaneous reactions and increase emotional flexibility (Cahn & Polich, 2006). These benefits can provide inmates with greater peace of mind regarding their incarceration, and a healthier outlook on life upon their release from prison. Considering that governmental modifications to inmate health services may take time, the responsibility for coping and resiliency must be upon the inmates. However, it is hoped that after learning the PSIT technique, the participants may find greater peace, share this with others, and have a more successful adaptation back into society upon completing their prison sentences.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted amid the COVID-19 pandemic, despite the challenges in maintaining the health protocols implemented by the Kerobokan Prison. Nevertheless, the results of this study are satisfying in terms of answering the research question: what is the transformative impact of a Psycho-Spiritual Integrative Therapy (PSIT) on the psychological well-being of inmates in Kerobokan Prison, Bali, Indonesia? Based on the input, impressions, and messages received

from the participants, they reported having received many benefits through participating in this program, and they felt grateful in the midst of the pandemic. Despite not being allowed to receive family visitations, our presence as a support system for them to express their mental and emotional states was very meaningful. They experienced the beginning of a transformative change in perspective characterized by feelings of regret, forgiveness, acceptance, belief, and affirmation. It is through the intervention that they felt inspired and could see their conditions from a broader and more diversified perspective, which enabled them to begin to manage their psychological processes in order to better serve out their prison sentences. Further consideration should be given to the long-term impact of the PSIT on the participants of this study, and how they have continued to incorporate their experiences.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researcher would like to give thanks to the Research and Community Service Department (LPPM) at Udayana University for funding this service program; to dr. Anak Agung Hartawan, The Head of the Clinical Department in Kerobokan Prison; all of the health care team in Kerobokan who helped a lot with the participants recruitment process; all of the research participants who were willing to participate in this research; and all other parties who were involved in order to make this activity successful.

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