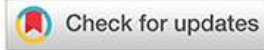


EXPLORATION OF IRRATIONAL BELIEFS OF PRISONERS WHO EXPERIENCE ANXIETY BEFORE RELEASE (CASE STUDY: CLASS IIA JEMBER CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION)



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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the irrational beliefs experienced by prisoners at the Class IIA Jember Correctional Institution, specifically related to anxiety that arises before release. Prisoners often face psychological disorders, including anxiety, which are triggered by various factors, such as the length of the sentence and uncertainty about life after release. The research method used was qualitative with a case study approach, involving three prisoners who experienced anxiety before release. The results of the interviews revealed the existence of irrational thought patterns, such as catastrophizing, where prisoners imagine the worst scenario related to social rejection and difficulty adapting after returning to society. The findings show that the anxiety experienced by prisoners is closely related to two types of irrational beliefs, namely catastrophizing and personalization, which contribute to increased anxiety that interferes with prisoners' mental health.

Keywords: Irrational Belief ; Prisoners ; Anxiety Ahead of Release



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Published by : Program Studi Manajemen, Universitas Nusa Cendana, Kupang – Indonesia

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INTRODUCTION

Prisoners endure a life that is profoundly filled with suffering and hardship while they are serving their sentences within the confines of the Correctional Institution. This state of suffering is a direct consequence of the unlawful acts they have committed, which have led to their incarceration (Bahtiyar, 2020). In his seminal work, *The Society of Captives*, Gresham M. Sykes articulates that the punishment experienced by prisoners is not merely a legal consequence but a form of pain that they must endure. Sykes identifies five distinct forms of suffering that prisoners commonly experience: the deprivation of freedom of movement, the limitation of interpersonal relationships, the loss of control over personal decisions, and the erosion of a sense of security. Given the significant amount of suffering that these individuals face on a daily basis, it is highly plausible that they may develop psychological disorders, which can adversely affect their mental health and overall psychological condition, particularly when they struggle to adjust to the often harsh and unforgiving prison environment.

Anxiety disorders, in particular, represent a prevalent psychological issue that affects approximately 3.6% of the global population, as reported by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2017. This issue is especially pronounced among prisoners in correctional institutions, where the unique stresses of incarceration can exacerbate feelings of anxiety (Dhamayanti, 2020). High levels of anxiety pose a significant threat to an individual's mental health and can have detrimental effects on their future prospects. A poignant example of this can be found in a tragic case that occurred at the Lubuk Basung Correctional Facility, where an inmate reportedly took his own life as a result of the severe anxiety he was experiencing (Depitriadi, n.d.). This heartbreaking incident serves as a stark reminder that unaddressed anxiety can have life-threatening consequences.

Numerous factors contribute to the development of anxiety disorders among prisoners, including the anxiety associated with just beginning their criminal sentences, the length of time they are required to serve, their age, the level of support they receive from family, the conditions of their environment, a lack of self-concept, and the psychological pressures they face as they approach their release (Nurfadilah, 2020). A review of various studies indicates that, in general, prisoners tend to experience heightened levels of anxiety during the period leading up to their release. An analysis of seven articles highlights that many prisoners report feelings of anxiety as they near the prospect of freedom (Hartini, 2023). This anxiety often arises from excessive fear and worry about future events that have yet to occur, which can trigger the emergence of irrational thoughts, commonly referred to as irrational beliefs. These irrational beliefs must be addressed and managed effectively to prevent them from causing further adverse effects on the individuals' mental health and well-being.

There are several types of irrational beliefs that have been articulated by prominent psychologists Aaron T. Beck and Marjorie E. Weishaar, which include various cognitive distortions that can significantly impact an individual's emotional state and coping mechanisms

1. **Arbitrary Inference**, This cognitive distortion occurs when an individual draws conclusions without adequate evidence to support those conclusions. For instance, a person may assume that a friend is deliberately avoiding them simply because the friend was not home during a visit. This type of thinking can lead to misunderstandings and unnecessary emotional distress, as the individual fails to consider alternative explanations for the friend's absence, such as being busy or having an emergency.

2. Selective Abstraction, the tendency to focus on one negative aspect and ignore other aspects that may be more positive or important. For example, a woman feels insecure about her skin color even though she is beautiful and attractive. This refers to the tendency to focus on a single negative detail while ignoring other more positive or relevant information. For example, a woman may feel insecure about her skin color despite being objectively beautiful and attractive. By fixating on this one aspect, she overlooks her positive qualities and the compliments she receives from others, which can lead to a distorted self-image and low self-esteem
3. Overgeneralization, a person's tendency to draw general conclusions based on one negative event and relate it to other situations that do not fit. For example, a woman is betrayed by her boyfriend, then she assumes all men are the same, namely like to betray. This cognitive error involves drawing broad conclusions based on a single negative event. For instance, if a woman is betrayed by her boyfriend, she might conclude that all men are untrustworthy and likely to betray her. This type of thinking can create a pervasive sense of distrust and can hinder future relationships, as the individual may project their past experiences onto new situations that may not be similar.
4. Catastrophizing, This distortion is characterized by an exaggerated negative interpretation of a situation. For example, if someone experiences a headache, they might immediately assume it is a sign of a serious illness, such as a tumor, and that they are facing imminent death. This type of thinking can lead to heightened anxiety and stress, as the individual fixates on the worst-case scenario rather than considering more likely and benign explanations for their symptoms.
5. Personalization, This cognitive distortion involves attributing personal responsibility to oneself for events that are largely outside of one's control. For instance, an individual may believe that they are the cause of their family's problems, feeling responsible for their parents' or siblings' emotions and reactions. This can lead to feelings of guilt and inadequacy, as the person fails to recognize that external factors and the actions of others also play significant roles in these situations
6. Dichotomous thinking, Also known as "black or white" thinking, this cognitive distortion involves viewing situations in extreme, all-or-nothing terms. For example, a student might think, "If I am not accepted at the University of Jember, then I will not go to college at all." This type of thinking can limit one's perspective and options, as it does not allow for the possibility of alternative paths or outcomes, leading to increased anxiety and disappointment.

In the context of prisoners who are on the verge of their release, it is crucial to recognize that irrational beliefs can significantly impact and influence their levels of anxiety. The transition from the highly structured and controlled environment of a correctional institution to the more unpredictable and often overwhelming reality of the general public can evoke a myriad of worries and fears that may not have been present during their incarceration. These irrational thoughts can manifest in various forms, including intense fears of social rejection from friends, family, and the community at large, apprehensions about the challenges they may face in securing stable employment, or concerns regarding their ability to adapt to the numerous changes that have occurred in society during their time in prison. Such thoughts can create a mental landscape filled

with uncertainty and dread, which can exacerbate their anxiety and hinder their ability to reintegrate successfully into society. Therefore, this study aims to delve deeper into the irrational beliefs experienced by prisoners at the Jember Class IIA Correctional Institution, with a particular focus on those individuals who are grappling with heightened anxiety in the critical period leading up to their release.

The Jember Correctional Facility, which serves as a correctional work unit within the East Java region, currently houses a total of 1,042 individuals, comprising 228 civil residents and 814 prisoners as of January 2024. Among these 814 prisoners, it is noteworthy that 30 individuals are scheduled for release at the end of February 2024. According to information provided by Dr. Diana, a dedicated health worker at the Jember Correctional Facility, several prisoners have sought consultation at the polyclinic section of the facility, presenting various symptoms indicative of anxiety as they navigate the challenging period leading up to their impending release. Furthermore, research conducted at the Jember Correctional Facility has revealed that a total of 20 individuals reported experiencing significant anxiety as they approached the prospect of freedom (Hadiyamsah, 2020). This data underscores the reality that anxiety before release is not only prevalent but also acutely felt by prisoners within the Jember Prison system.

In light of this compelling information, the author is motivated to delve deeper into the exploration of the irrational beliefs held by prisoners who are grappling with anxiety as they near their release from the Class IIA Jember Correctional Institution. This investigation aims to shed light on the cognitive distortions that may exacerbate their feelings of anxiety and hinder their reintegration into society.

LITERATURE REVIEW,

Research conducted by Beni (2022) on the role of counseling in building prisoners' self-confidence found some prisoners experience weak self-confidence and fear of rejection by the community. The level of weak self-confidence and fear of community rejection starts from irrational thoughts or irrational beliefs. Irrational thinking is characterized by anxiety, feeling lower than others, and feeling unworthy. This disrupts the thoughts and activities of prisoners in prison so that prisoners feel uncomfortable, make problems in prison so that they cannot get remission (Beni, 2022).

Research conducted in Lapas X found 128 prisoners who were sampled in this study. Of the total sample it was found that 56% of prisoners showed low social anxiety, 42% showed moderate social anxiety, and 2% showed high social anxiety. Anxiety experienced by prisoners starts from disturbed thoughts while they are serving their sentence in prison. Indications of high anxiety may stem from the inmates' own irrational beliefs that have a negative impact on their health (Nita, 2023).

The next research conducted Cognitive Behaviour Therapy on children in the Tomohon Class IIB Special Development Institution. The therapist in this case tries to help child clients at LPKA Tomohon to change their thoughts and rejection of themselves, as well as irrational beliefs. These irrational beliefs can cause problems for children in the future (Sisfiani, 2020).

These studies show evidence that cases of irrational beliefs in prisoners often occur. This irrational thinking can adversely affect the mental health conditions of prisoners while serving a criminal period. Therefore, researchers want to find out more about the existence of irrational beliefs in prisoners at the Class IIA Jember Correctional Institution.

METHOD

This study applies qualitative methods with a focus on case study research. The purpose of qualitative research is to explore and understand the meaning related to social problems of several individuals or groups. Essentially, qualitative research addresses topics such as history, community life, phenomena or concepts, and social problems. With a qualitative approach, it can help understand the perspectives and social phenomena under study. This method produces descriptive data from the behavior of the person under study, both orally and in writing (Wahyuni, 2013). The selection of this type of case study research is to find uniqueness in exploring the irrational beliefs of prisoners who experience anxiety when approaching release at the Jember class IIA Correctional Institution.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, there were 3 (three) research subjects, namely prisoners who experienced anxiety at the Class IIA Jember Correctional Institution. The selection of these research subjects was based on specific criteria that included prisoners who were approaching their release, particularly those who were vulnerable during the last 1-2 months of their incarceration. All subjects were male, involved in cases of persecution, and were aged between 30 to 50 years. Additionally, it is important to note that these individuals were first-time offenders, categorized as nonrecidivists, which means they had not previously been incarcerated for criminal offenses.

Table 1
Informants

No	Initials	Gender	Age	Case
1.	NA	Male	35	Persecution
2.	KE	Male	39	Persecution
3.	AH	Male	50	Persecution

After collecting data through a comprehensive approach that included the use of questionnaires, interviews, observation, and documentation techniques, it was found that the three informants, who are prisoners preparing for their release at the Jember Correctional Institution, were experiencing significant levels of anxiety. This anxiety stems from their deep concerns about their families who are waiting for them at home, coupled with an overwhelming fear of what lies ahead in the period following their release. They express a profound apprehension about reintegrating into their communities, fearing that they will struggle to navigate their environments and that they may not be able to continue their lives more positively and constructively. As the date of their release draws nearer, the intensity of their anxiety escalates, which in turn triggers the emergence of irrational beliefs that further complicate their emotional state. To gain a deeper understanding of these feelings, the researcher posed questions to informant AH regarding the specific reasons behind his anxiety, AH said :

"I was wrong, it's true that I was wrong. I'm old mom, inside I feel always alone. I've never been visited since I was sentenced until now, unlike other friends, it makes me sad to think about it. I feel very useless when I think of my parents at home alone." (AH, interview dated March 28, 2024).

The researcher asked informant NA about the reasons he was anxious, as for the contents of the interview obtained by the researcher, namely as follows:

"...I want to go home but I'm afraid, embarrassed to meet people. Last night I went to bed around 1 o'clock, usually every day I go to bed at 12 o'clock. Sometimes I get dizzy and I think I urinate a lot..." (NA, interview on March 28, 2024)

From the results of the interview conducted with informant AH, it became evident that he repeatedly expressed feelings of remorse and acknowledged that he had made mistakes in the past. He conveyed a profound sense of sadness that permeated his experience during his time in prison, particularly highlighting the fact that he had never once received a visit from his family throughout his entire incarceration. This lack of familial support contributed significantly to his feelings of being unaccepted and unwanted, leading him to perceive himself as profoundly alone in his struggles. On the other hand, informant NA articulated a strong desire to return home, yet he was paralyzed by an overwhelming fear of facing the reality of his situation. His anxiety stemmed from a deep-seated concern about how he would be judged by others upon his release, which further exacerbated his feelings of apprehension. The experiences of both AH and NA illustrate a common psychological phenomenon among prisoners, where they grapple with irrational thoughts that lead them to overthink their circumstances, ultimately giving rise to irrational beliefs that can hinder their emotional well-being as they approach their release.

The type of irrational belief experienced by AH and NA includes catastrophizing. According to Beck (1989), catastrophizing is the tendency to imagine the worst possibilities in a situation or think about something excessively beyond the actual reality. Individuals who experience catastrophizing tend to view problems or events with a very negative perspective and exaggerate the bad consequences that may occur. In short, catastrophizing is a mindset that greatly exaggerates the worst-case scenario and ignores the possibility of a better or realistic outcome (Beck, 1989). The type of irrational belief that is notably experienced by both AH and NA is categorized as catastrophizing. This cognitive distortion can significantly impact their emotional well-being, as it fosters a mindset that greatly amplifies the worst-case scenarios while simultaneously disregarding the possibility of more favorable or realistic outcomes. In essence, catastrophizing represents a thought pattern that not only magnifies fears and anxieties but also clouds one's ability to see the situation in a balanced and rational light, ultimately contributing to heightened levels of distress and apprehension (Beck, 1989).

Some indications of catastrophizing revealed in AH are AH's statement that he feels that he is always guilty and feels sad constantly, expressing continuous concern that he will not be accepted from the beginning to the end of his sentence.

"After I get out, how can I earn money, what can I and my parents eat later" (AH, interview on March 28, 2024).

The sentence reflects AH's worst imaginings of community rejection when he is released. Catastrophizing that was revealed in NA, he revealed:

" I really want to go home but I'm afraid, I'm embarrassed to meet people" (NA, interview on March 28, 2024).

NA articulated a profound and excessive concern regarding the potential negative consequences he might face when interacting with others following his release from prison. This overwhelming anxiety manifests in the form of vivid imaginings of worst-case scenarios, where he envisions experiences of rejection and an overwhelming sense of shame that could accompany his reintegration into society. Such catastrophic thinking

leads NA to engage in a cognitive distortion known as catastrophizing, wherein he conjures up the most dire outcomes imaginable, including the possibility of total rejection by his peers, a lack of acceptance within his community, and an inability to successfully rebuild his life after serving his sentence. This pattern of thought aligns closely with the definition provided by Beck, who describes catastrophizing as the tendency to exaggerate negative consequences while simultaneously disregarding any positive possibilities that may exist. In essence, NA's thought process exemplifies how irrational beliefs can significantly impact an individual's emotional state and outlook on their future

In contrast to the irrational belief experienced by AH and NA, KE experienced irrational belief with the type of Personalization. KE revealed:

" I think of my parents and children when I go home, I'm afraid they will be embarrassed" (KE, interview on March 28, 2024).

From this expression, the EC assumed that his family (parents and children) would feel embarrassed if he came home after serving his sentence in prison. She made a direct connection between herself and the feelings of shame that her family might experience, without considering other factors such as family support, their understanding, or the actual situation. This shows that KE is experiencing irrational beliefs which include a type of personalization. According to Aaron, personalization is the tendency to consider ourselves as the source or main cause of negative events that occur outside of ourselves, when in fact they are not always caused by us directly. As expressed by KE, he feels that his parents and children will be embarrassed when he is free later when in reality there may be other factors that contribute and are beyond his control.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Irrational beliefs were found in prisoners who experienced anxiety when approaching release at the Class IIA Jember Correctional Institution. The types of irrational beliefs found are catastrophizing and personalization. Prisoners show a catastrophizing mindset, where they imagine the worst possible scenario after they are free, such as rejection and non-acceptance by society. Prisoners who exhibit a personalizing mindset feel that they will harm their family, their family will feel embarrassed when they return home, and they feel without considering other factors that may contribute. Both types of irrational thinking contribute to increased anxiety in prisoners leading up to their release, which can affect their reintegration process into society. This shows that the anxiety experienced by individuals will result in prisoners thinking irrationally about themselves which is called irrational belief.

To support the mental health of prisoners approaching release, it is important for correctional institutions to improve psychological counseling programs that can help them overcome irrational beliefs and anxiety. This program should include cognitive techniques that aim to change negative thought patterns into more positive ones, so that prisoners can be better prepared for life after their sentence.

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