

## THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY COUNSELLORS IN DEALING WITH COMMUNITY STIGMA TOWARDS CORRECTIONAL CLIENTS AT BAPAS CLASS I CIREBON



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### ABSTRACT

*The thickening of community stigma can hinder the integration of former prisoners into the community environment. This study aims to determine the role of community supervisors in dealing with and minimizing community stigma for correctional clients, in addition to identifying what obstacles there are in dealing with community stigma for correctional clients. The research method used in this research is a qualitative research method that utilizes in-depth interviews and observations. The results of the study found that the description of community stigma to correctional clients in the work area of the Cirebon Class I Correctional Centre covering five cities and regencies is indeed true, as evidenced by people who have concerns, suspicions, and misconceptions, and some words should not be from the community to clients. In addition, there is no role for government agencies or, in this case, the correctional center, related to the problem of community stigma.*

**Keywords:** Stigma; Correctional Clients; Community Supervisors



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## INTRODUCTION

The development of prisoners is not only carried out when the prisoners are in the penitentiary, but also continues when the prisoners have left the penitentiary and live again in society. The effort is reintegration, which is recovery through the adjustment of different social elements carried out by former prisoners. Correctional Centre is a government institution that has the function of guiding former prisoners to restore the relationship of former prisoners with the community (Kellina in Prayitno, 2023).

Various ways to reduce overcrowding in prisons and detention centres, one of which is to overcome these problems, is the assimilation and reintegration programme for prisoners to blend them directly into society. Prisoners are entitled to Parole (PB), Conditional Leave (CB), and Leave Ahead of Release (CMB) provided they fulfil the requirements. After the prisoner is released from the prison, they will receive further guidance conducted by the Correctional Centre (Bapas), which will change their status from Prisoner to Correctional Client. Guiding each client to achieve successful social reintegration is the main task of Bapas itself (Sudirman & Sulhin, 2019).

The prevalence of community stigma can hinder the integration of ex-prisoners into the community. Stigma makes it difficult for ex-offenders to find work or earn a living, which affects their mental health. The stigma received by former prisoners can cause stress, shame, depression, anger, and also produce physical, behavioural, or mental reactions. The meaning of the reaction is that stigma can stimulate physical reactions, such as symptoms of anxiety or excessive stress reactions. In addition, it can affect mental health by increasing the risk of mental health problems or exacerbating existing conditions. Behavioural reactions may include self-isolation, avoidance of social gatherings, or even avoidance of seeking health assistance (Baffour in Prayitno, 2023).

Social reintegration is an attempt by correctional institutions to restore a complete relationship between the prisoner and himself, the surrounding environment, and his creator. In essence, the goal of the prisoner rehabilitation programme is to achieve reintegration that can restore all aspects of the prisoner's life. In this case, correctional institutions aim to change the social attitudes and behaviour of prisoners so that they can be accepted back in society. However, the implementation of social reintegration is often difficult to achieve as there is still a negative stigma from society towards ex-prisoners. In fact, the main challenge of incarceration is reintegration into society (Azhar & Muhammad, 2023).

These unfounded stigmas are also directed towards the families and loved ones of ex-prisoners. Society tends to discriminate against parents, children, wives/husbands, and even relatives of former prisoners. This will certainly harm the lives of these innocent people and is a form of human rights violation. The negative response given by society to ex-convicts is basically a consequence of what an ex-convict has done (Bapino et al., 2022).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Prayitno's (2023) research was to explore the stigma experienced by former terrorist prisoners through semi-structured interviews with four former terrorist prisoners and one significant other. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the social world of research participants. The results showed that former terrorist prisoners experienced stigma in the form of labelling, stereotyping, separation, discrimination, and loss of status. They deal with stigma by developing problem-solving and social group-seeking strategies, as well as aspects of self-control and distancing. The conclusion of this study is that former terrorist prisoners experience

stigma from various sources and the stigma can cause difficulties in finding employment and impact on their mental well-being. Suggestions to overcome stigma include developing good coping, supporting the reintegration of ex-offenders, and not discriminating against them (Prayitno, 2023).

Bapino et al., (2022) conducted research discussing discrimination and stigma against former prisoners, as well as human rights in the context of Indonesian law. This research aims to find out how the protection of the rights of ex-convicts and the influence of negative community stigma on the lives of ex-convicts. The results show that the rights of ex-convicts are the same as the rights of other citizens, and they must be protected in accordance with Law No. 39/1999 on Human Rights. However, the negative stigma of society towards ex-prisoners affects their lives after leaving prison, such as difficulties in finding work and being considered a social stain. The study concluded that ex-prisoners often experience negative stigma from society, which makes it difficult for them to adapt and face discrimination. This stigma can affect their social and work lives and can lead to re-offending. Communities tend to reject the presence of ex-prisoners due to social stigma and the belief that they will re-offend. This can also cause injustice in family, work and daily life (Bapino et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Putrie and Prasetya (2021) in their research discussed the experience of former female prisoners of fraud in facing social stigma after being released from detention. They experienced labelling, stereotyping, and discrimination from family and society, but also received support from their husbands' family and friends. They showed an optimistic attitude, vigilance, and gratitude for the trials they faced. This research is a descriptive study with a qualitative approach with a phenomenological approach. Researchers used data collection procedures using interview techniques. The results showed that both participants experienced physical and psychological anxiety related to social stigma, but both also showed progress in accepting the situation and being optimistic for the future. Social stigma anxiety can affect physiological, psychological, somatic, cognitive, emotional, behavioural, labelling, stereotyping, and discrimination (Putrie & Prasetya, 2021).

## **METHOD**

The research method used in this research is to use a case study that seeks to explain something related to cases that occur in the community related to community stigma to correctional clients, in this study exploring how the role of Community Supervisors in dealing with these events. In addition, it is also to find out how the stigma of the community towards former prisoners or correctional clients, especially in the work area of the Cirebon Class I Correctional Centre. Case study research design conducted to explain the role of Community Supervisors in dealing with community stigma against correctional clients on the implementation of the social reintegration process.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

After conducting interviews with all informants, the author found several research results related to community stigma towards correctional clients associated with the role of Community Supervisors. Of the two informants representing the community, the author took two village heads or villages in the working area of the Cirebon Class I Correctional Centre, namely the Cikaso village head and the Jalaksana village head. Both of them describe how the stigma of society towards correctional clients. From the results of interviews with the two village heads illustrate that the stigma of the community to the client is true as evidenced by people who have concerns, suspicions, misconceptions and

some words should not be from the community to the client. In addition, some people keep their distance from clients or avoid them, resulting in less harmonious relationships.

In addition to the description of community stigma said by the two village heads, the author found clients' views on community stigma. However, the two clients have different answers regarding the views of the community or community stigma towards the client. According to the views of client Yadi regarding the stigma faced, the client said that he felt worried, lacked confidence, had difficulty finding work after being released from prison, and also felt ostracised by the community. However, client Wawan gave a different view from the description of stigma expressed by client Yadi. Wawan conveyed the view of community stigma to him. The client stated that the community accepted him well, there were no problems, and no stigma arose from the community. The reason is that the client used to be active in social activities in the community and maintains his behaviour so that the community can accept him.

There has been no effort to face and minimise stigma directly to the community. There is no role for government institutions, or in this case, the Correctional Centre, related to the problem of community stigma. The village government takes a role such as providing education to the community in activities carried out, as mentioned earlier, for example, during the mobile taraweh prayer. Understanding the stigma of former prisoners must be given to the community, for example, by conducting socialisation or structured activities.

The functions of roles according to Narwoko and Suyanto (2010) include giving direction to the socialisation process; inheritance of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, and knowledge; can unite groups or communities; and turn on the system of control and control, to preserve community life. In terms of giving direction to the socialisation process, beliefs, values, norms, and knowledge to clients, Community Supervisors in the guidance process provide reinforcement related to the norms that apply in society, both legal norms, community norms, religious norms, and other norms or rules. Explaining to clients things that should not be done because they can violate applicable norms or rules.

The next role function can unite groups or communities. Community supervisors in assisting the social reintegration process of a correctional client will certainly be faced with various challenges, one of which is the stigma of society towards correctional clients. The existence of a rift in social relations in the community due to criminal offences committed by clients makes it one of the duties of Community Supervisors to improve the client's social relations with the community. The Community Supervisor communicates with the community through the village or kelurahan government officials where the client lives, providing an understanding that the client has changed, as evidenced by the results of the assessment that has been carried out. Communication with the community can be done during the Litmas data collection or home visits. After communicating with community leaders by providing understanding related to clients who are undergoing a period of guidance, community leaders who provide understanding to other communities, so that clients can be well-received amid society.

The last role function is to turn on the control and control system, so as to preserve community life. In terms of the reintegration process carried out by correctional clients, Community Supervisors not only carry out guidance but also carry out supervision of correctional clients. Supervision is carried out to control clients in the reintegration process so that clients do not repeat criminal offences again or recidivism. This supervision is also carried out so that the community feels safe, community supervisors work with the community to supervise clients, when in the process of reintegrating clients commit criminal acts again or do things that are considered dangerous or make

noise in the community, community supervisors can revoke the reintegration programme, so that community life will be controlled.

In addition to the role function, there are several dimensions of the role according to Horoeopetri et al (2003), including the role as a communication tool and the role as therapy. In the role of a communication tool, the Community Supervisor becomes a bridge or liaison between the client and the community. Therefore, communication skills are needed by a Community Supervisor. It is not easy to convey to the community that the client has changed for the better and will return to live together in the community, especially given the community stigma that arises around correctional clients.

Furthermore, the role of therapy, Community Supervisors conduct counselling to clients, can help increase client confidence, find solutions to problems faced by clients, explore the skills and potential of clients, and then develop them. The counselling carried out by the Community Supervisor can be said to be a therapy because it helps restore the confidence and motivation of clients who carry out the social reintegration process. Community Counselors have an important role in dealing with and minimizing community stigma towards correctional clients. Community Counselors can provide direction to the socialisation process of correctional clients by providing guidance and support in adjusting back to society. In addition, Community Counselors can also unite groups or communities by facilitating positive interactions between clients and the surrounding environment. In this case, Community Supervisors play a role in reviving the control and control system to help minimise community stigma against correctional clients and maintain the harmony of community life.

From the role dimension according to Horoeopetri et al (2003), Community Counselors can also act as an effective communication tool between correctional clients and the surrounding community to improve perceptions and relationships between the two. Community Counselors can also act as therapists by providing emotional support, counseling, and guidance to clients to overcome the negative impact of community stigma. Thus, Community Supervisors can assist correctional clients in dealing with community stigma and minimising its negative impact through various functions and dimensions of their role (Horoeopetri et al., 2003).

Erving Goffman explains several concepts in his stigma theory including Self, Identity, and Stigma. Self here relates to the individual self, how the individual himself sees or interprets himself. In this case how the client sees what the client is like, how the client sees what the shortcomings or weaknesses are and also what is the potential or advantages of the client's self. Because to change the stigma of society the most basic and most important thing is how the client is.

The second concept of stigma is identity, Goffman divides identity into two, namely virtual social identity and actual social identity. Virtual social identity is an identity that is formed from the characters that we assume or think about someone called characterisation. Just like the assumptions of society or the perception of society to clients or the stigma that society places on clients is what is called virtual social identity. Whereas actual social identity is an identity that is formed from proven characters, in this case when the client is able to change for the better his personality, and is able to show other people that the client's self is not like what society assumes so that people become convinced and can accept the client well with his status as an ex-convict then that is what is called actual social identity. So to be able to minimise stigma in the mentoring process carried out by the client, it is not enough for the client himself but also the family and the surrounding community who must help the client in changing himself for the better.



After self and identity Goffman explains the last concept, namely stigma, if someone has attributes that make him different from people who are in the same category as him (such as being worse, dangerous or weak), then he will be assumed to be a tainted person. This attribute is called stigma. So the term stigma refers to attributes that greatly deteriorate a person's image. In this case, the correctional client is an ex-convict who has attributes from the community because he has committed a criminal offence and then entered the correctional institution, so from this, the stigma of the community arises.

In dealing with and minimising community stigma for Correctional Clients, there are several factors that become obstacles. One of the inhibiting factors that can be associated with the concept of stigma, according to Erving Goffman, is the client's self-identity. The client's self-identity associated with the past as an inmate or ex-inmate can be an obstacle in overcoming community stigma. The stigma attached to this identity can affect the way the client views himself and how he interacts with the surrounding community.

In addition, another inhibiting factor is the community's perception of correctional clients. The stigma attached to the client can be influenced by society's negative view of ex-convicts. This can make the client feel isolated and difficult to be accepted back into society after serving a correctional period.

The concept of Self in Goffman's stigma theory can also be an inhibiting factor. The client's self-concept, which is affected by the stigma of society, can affect the client's confidence and motivation to interact with the surrounding environment. The stigma attached to the client's self can hinder the process of social reintegration and client recovery after leaving the correctional centre.

In dealing with and minimising community stigma for correctional clients, community supervisors need to understand these inhibiting factors and develop appropriate strategies to help clients overcome stigma and improve relationships with the surrounding community. With the right approach, community stigma can be minimised and correctional clients can get the support they need to succeed in the social reintegration process.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

The role of Community Supervisors in dealing with community stigma to correctional clients can be done by providing reinforcement during the implementation of counselling. The strengthening in question can be in the form of providing an understanding to the client that the existence of community stigma is due to the client's status as an ex-convict and it is a consequence that must be accepted by the client as a result of the criminal act he committed. In addition, Community Supervisors must optimise the guidance process both from the initial, middle and final stages. In addition, if it is deemed necessary to conduct self-reliance guidance, it is adjusted to the interests and talents of the client and also the self-reliance guidance programme in Bapas.

Some of the factors that inhibit a Community Supervisor in dealing with and minimising community stigma for Correctional Clients include the Client and the client's environment which is an inhibiting factor in minimising the stigma itself. This stigma can arise because of the criminal offence committed by the client himself. So that stigma can be minimised is a change in attitude and behaviour shown by the client to the community and maintain these positive changes consistently. In addition to the client himself, the surrounding community can also be an inhibiting factor, because stigma arises from the community so that to be able to create a harmonious relationship between the client and

the community is with the support of the community where the client lives. In addition, the inhibiting factor is the number of Community Supervisors with the number of clients who are not comparable, which has an impact on the implementation of the duties of the Community Supervisor itself. The last is the provision of facilities to support the tasks and performance that are unevenly experienced by Community Supervisors.

The author suggests that to minimise the stigma of the community towards ex-convicts is to create programmes such as educational seminars, where the target of activities is the general public including students and students. The seminar is made as interesting as possible, of course associated with Community Supervisors who play a role in helping former prisoners return to life in the midst of society again. The hope is that the educational seminar programme can at least provide some understanding to the public about the stigma attached to ex-prisoners.

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