

BECOMING A CARING LEADER: STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING INMATE DEVELOPMENT



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ABSTRACT

Prisoner development is the core of the correctional system, which aims to prepare inmates to return to society as productive individuals. One of the determining factors for the success of the development program is the leadership implemented by correctional officials, especially the head of the correctional institution (prison) and community counselors (PK). This article discusses the concept of caring leadership and its strategic role in improving the quality of prisoner development. Through a descriptive qualitative approach and literature study, this article finds that leaders who demonstrate empathy, openness, effective communication, and consistency in action are able to create a more humane coaching environment, support rehabilitation, and reduce recidivism.

Keywords: *Caring Leadership; Correctional; Prisoner Development; Rehabilitation; Recidivism*



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INTRODUCTION

The correctional system in Indonesia has undergone significant transformation in the last few decades. From a paradigm that initially emphasized the aspect of punishment (retributive justice), now this system focuses more on the process of social guidance and reintegration (restorative justice). The main goal of correctional is to shape prisoners to realize their mistakes, improve themselves, and return to being useful members of society. However, in its implementation, coaching efforts often face various challenges, both in terms of structure, culture, and human resources.

One of the major challenges is the imbalance between the workload and the number of correctional officers, overcapacity of correctional institutions, and the social stigma against prisoners. Amidst this complexity, the role of a leader becomes very crucial. Leadership is not only about the ability to manage an organization and obey rules, but also about the ability to build human relations with individuals who are undergoing a period of development. This is where the importance of caring leadership lies.

Caring leadership places the values of empathy, concern, and social responsibility at the core of leadership. In the context of corrections, caring leaders not only focus on achieving administrative targets, but also truly understand the psychological and social needs of inmates. They are present as figures who do not judge, but rather guide and accompany. This caring attitude is reflected in openness to the aspirations of inmates, providing second chances, and fair and humane treatment.

This kind of leadership not only increases the effectiveness of the coaching program, but also creates a healthy and conducive organizational climate. Inmates who feel cared for and appreciated tend to show more cooperative behavior, are active in participating in coaching activities, and have hope for improving their future. Conversely, an authoritarian, closed, or unempathetic leadership style often worsens the psychological condition of inmates and hinders the rehabilitation process.

On the other hand, caring leaders also play a vital role in empowering other correctional officers. They set an example in attitude and behavior, promote an inclusive work culture, and ensure that humanitarian values are not just slogans, but are actually implemented in daily practice. In the long term, this leadership approach is believed to be able to reduce the recidivism rate and increase the success of social reintegration of prisoners.

Based on this background, this article aims to discuss in depth the concept of caring leadership in the correctional environment as well as concrete strategies that can be applied to improve the development of prisoners. This research is important to provide new perspectives as well as practical solutions for policy makers and technical implementers in correctional environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Leadership in Community Development

Leadership is a process of influencing others to achieve common goals. In the context of an organization, leadership is not only related to formal authority, but also to the interpersonal skills and moral character of a leader (Northouse, 2016). In the correctional system, leadership has a more complex dimension because it involves managing people who are serving sentences and the process of coaching.

According to Permenkumham No. 35 of 2018 concerning Revitalization of Correctional Services, prisoner development is one of the core tasks of correctional institutions, and its success is greatly influenced by the role of the institution's leader. Effective leaders in this environment are required not only to master administration and

regulations, but also to have concern for the process of changing prisoner behavior. Therefore, the leadership style applied must be able to integrate formal aspects (tasks) with relational aspects (humanity).

Caring Leadership Theory

Caring leadership theory places empathy, social sensitivity, and concern for the well-being of others at the heart of the leadership process. Halifax (2018) in her "compassionate leadership" framework states that leaders who have compassion will be better able to create an emotionally safe work environment, which has an impact on increasing individual trust and engagement in an organization.

In the context of corrections, caring leadership can be interpreted as a leadership approach that prioritizes humanitarian values in fostering inmates. Caring leaders do not view prisoners as burdens, but as human beings with the potential to change and improve. This concern is reflected in the attitude of listening, being fair, avoiding verbal and physical violence, and providing moral and motivational support to inmates and staff.

Goleman (2006) states that leaders who are able to manage social relationships well will create a positive emotional impact on the people they lead. This is especially important in correctional institutions, where levels of stress, trauma, and conflict tend to be high. The presence of a caring leader can reduce these tensions and build a more productive coaching atmosphere.

Principles of Humanity-Based Corrections

The philosophy of corrections in Indonesia has experienced a paradigm shift since the enactment of Law Number 12 of 1995 concerning Corrections. This system prioritizes the principles of protection, justice, and respect for human dignity. Therefore, the coaching approach must not use repressive or discriminatory methods.

The principles of humanistic coaching include:

- Recognition of prisoners' rights such as the right to health, education, worship and fair treatment.
- Individualized coaching that adapts the program based on the background, personality, and potential of each inmate.
- Skills and education enhancement to support social reintegration.
- Community participation in supporting reintegration and reducing stigma.

Caring leaders play a role in ensuring that these principles are not just regulations on paper, but are actually implemented on the ground. They become the driving force behind changes in work culture that are more inclusive and oriented towards the social transformation of prisoners.

Relationship between Leadership and Coaching Success

Various studies have shown that the leadership style applied by correctional leaders greatly influences the success of the correctional program. Research by Rahmawati & Suryono (2020) concluded that leaders who apply a communicative, participatory, and empathetic approach are better able to improve the discipline and motivation of prisoners in participating in correctional activities. Meanwhile, an authoritarian leadership style tends to strengthen resistance, create emotional distance, and even foster latent conflict.

Furthermore, the success of the rehabilitation is closely related to the extent to which prisoners feel they are treated as human beings, not merely as lawbreakers. Therefore, caring leadership is one of the main pillars that supports the creation of positive social relationships between leaders, officers, and inmates.

Challenges of Implementing Caring Leadership

Although ideal, the implementation of caring leadership in correctional environments faces many obstacles. Among them are a rigid bureaucratic culture, minimal value-based leadership training, high workloads, and low understanding of the importance of mental health for both officers and inmates.

In addition, many leaders still see prisoners as a group that deserves harsh punishment and does not deserve more attention. This paradigm must be changed through scientific approaches and policies that support development as a path to change, not just detention.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a library research method. Data were obtained from journals, books, and official documents relevant to the theme of prisoner leadership and development. The analysis was conducted by examining the relationship between the concept of caring leadership and coaching practices in the correctional system.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Urgent Need for Caring Leadership in Corrections

Correctional institutions (prisons) in Indonesia are currently facing multidimensional challenges that are systemic in nature. The high number of overcapacity, limited facilities and infrastructure for coaching, and the lack of professional staff in the fields of psychology and social coaching are real obstacles in carrying out the mandate of Law Number 12 of 1995 concerning Corrections. One of the roots of the problem that often escapes attention is the leadership style that is still conventional and administrative, which tends to focus solely on the technical aspects of order and security, without touching on the psychosocial side of prisoners in depth.

Amidst this complexity, the need for a leader figure who is not only oriented towards structural performance, but also has human sensitivity, is becoming increasingly important. Caring leadership is present as an alternative approach that is very relevant to the spirit of more humane correctional reform, as mandated in the principles of modern corrections.

A caring correctional leader does not view inmates as a burden on the institution, but rather as human beings undergoing a process of social rehabilitation. The concern in question is not merely emotional, but is demonstrated through policies, attitudes, and actions that reflect respect for the rights, dignity, and potential of inmates. A prison chief who goes directly to the housing block, talks with inmates, understands their concerns, and responds concretely, has a much greater impact than relying solely on reports from his subordinates.

Furthermore, caring leadership in correctional settings requires leaders to be able to read social and psychological dynamics in stressful environments. The closed prison environment, with its monotonous routines, often causes boredom, stress, and even depression among prisoners. If not handled with the right approach, this can lead to conflict, violence, and even suicide attempts. Caring leaders will recognize the importance

of building a safe psychological space — where inmates can express their feelings, get support, and be encouraged to grow into better people.

Caring leadership is also very important in building trust between inmates and officers. In many cases, the tension or conflict that occurs between the two parties is triggered by a lack of healthy communication and an authoritarian leadership pattern. When a leader appears as a figure who is fair, open, and protective of all parties, a more harmonious working atmosphere will be created. In the long term, this will facilitate the implementation of coaching programs and reduce the potential for security disturbances.

In addition, leaders who prioritize caring values will also be more responsive to the training and development needs of officers. They are aware that the quality of coaching is greatly influenced by the capacity and welfare of correctional officers. Therefore, caring leadership is not only on the side of the inmates, but also pays attention to the internal conditions of the organization as a whole. Such a leader will be more sensitive to the work stress of officers, conflicts between staff, and team performance dynamics, and strive to create a work culture that supports the psychological well-being of all members of the organization.

In the context of Indonesian correctional institutions that are transforming towards a more just and socially reintegrative system, caring leadership becomes a strategic need. This is not just a choice of leadership style, but an answer to the need for an approach that touches on the human dimension in the midst of a system that has tended to be mechanistic.

Therefore, efforts to instill the values of caring leadership must begin from the recruitment and education process of prospective correctional leaders, supported by ongoing training, and strengthening of organizational culture that upholds the values of empathy, justice, and professionalism.

Strategy for Implementing Caring Leadership in Prisoner Development

To realize caring leadership in the correctional environment, a structured and sustainable implementation strategy is needed. Caring leadership is not just about personal character, but must be formed through systems, organizational culture, and policies that support leaders in carrying out caring roles effectively. Here are some strategies that can be implemented:

a. **Individual and Humanistic Approach to Inmates**

Correctional leaders need to encourage staff and corrections officers not to treat prisoners uniformly or simply as registration numbers. An approach is needed that humanizes them as individuals with different backgrounds, problems, and potential. This strategy can be realized through personality assessments, psychosocial interviews, and behavioral observations as a basis for formulating appropriate coaching programs.

For example, prisoners who have experienced childhood trauma or domestic violence require a more empathetic and counseling-based approach than those who committed crimes for economic reasons. Caring leaders will ensure that the rehabilitative program is tailored to the needs of each individual, not just an administrative formality.

b. **Building Open and Empathetic Two-Way Communication**

One of the main pillars of caring leadership is communication. Leaders must not place themselves too far from the reality on the ground. Through dialogue forums, regular visits to housing blocks, and inmate forums, leaders can listen directly to the complaints and aspirations of prisoners.

Good communication also needs to be built internally, between leaders and officers, in order to foster a sense of mutual trust. Leaders need to give staff space to express ideas, complaints, and innovations without fear of being blamed. An empathetic communication style will create an open, productive, and solution-oriented work climate.

c. Be an Example of Ethics and Justice in Everyday Actions

This strategy emphasizes that leaders must act as role models in implementing the values of justice, integrity, and caring. In the context of corrections, fairness is not only about treating inmates without discrimination, but also about providing treatment that is appropriate to their conditions and needs.

For example, when a disciplinary violation occurs by an inmate, a caring leader will not immediately punish harshly or humiliate, but will try to understand the root of the problem and use a restorative approach. This example will have a positive impact on the overall organizational culture.

d. Encouraging Cross-Sector Collaboration in Prisoner Development

Comprehensive coaching cannot be done by one institution alone. A caring leader will actively build networks and cooperation with various parties, such as psychologists, academics, religious institutions, civil society organizations, and the business world.

Through this collaboration, inmates can gain more access to counseling services, job skills training, entrepreneurship programs, religious education, and post-release mentoring. Caring leadership opens up space for inclusive community involvement, making the social reintegration process more effective.

e. Building a Humanistic Monitoring and Evaluation System

A caring leader must have indicators of success that are not only quantitative, but also qualitative. Evaluation of the coaching program must involve aspects of changes in attitudes, self-confidence, and social relations of the inmates. This requires a reflective monitoring approach and involves inmates as subjects, not passive objects.

For example, evaluations can be conducted through open-ended questionnaires, focus group discussion sessions, or in-depth interviews that explore inmates' feelings and hopes for their future.

f. Ensuring the Welfare and Quality of Life of Correctional Officers

Caring leadership not only focuses on inmates, but also pays attention to officers as the main pillars of implementing coaching. Leaders need to ensure regular training, psychosocial support for officers experiencing burnout, and a fair and transparent reward and promotion system.

Leaders must also foster a spirit of collegiality, mutual respect, and cooperation between work units, so that a healthy and solid work atmosphere is created. Officer job satisfaction will be reflected in the way they serve and guide prisoners.

By integrating these strategies, caring leadership is not just a slogan, but can be realized in every aspect of prison life. This kind of transformation will have a long-term impact on reducing recidivism rates, increasing the social readiness of prisoners, and creating a more humane and just prison image.

Impact of Caring Leadership on Guidance and Correctional Environment

Caring leadership has a significant influence in shaping the climate of correctional institutions and determining the success of the inmate development process. The impact

of implementing this leadership style is not only felt by inmates, but also by officers and even the wider community. When caring values are embedded in the organizational culture, positive changes will emerge systematically, not just incidentally.

a. Improving the Quality of Relations between Prisoners and Officers

Caring leadership encourages the birth of healthy and humane social relations in prisons. In many cases, the relationship between officers and prisoners is often built on the basis of domination and subordination. However, with an empathetic and humanistic leadership approach, this relationship becomes more cooperative and participatory.

Inmates who feel respected as human beings tend to show a more open attitude, are less likely to rebel, and are more ready to accept direction and guidance. This harmonious relationship creates a conducive atmosphere in the implementation of coaching programs, as well as reducing the potential for conflict, violence, or disciplinary violations.

b. Improving the Effectiveness of Coaching Programs

Correctional development programs often face obstacles to active participation and involvement from inmates. One of the main causes is the inmates' distrust of the system, which is considered impartial and merely a formality. However, when leaders appear as caring figures and show real commitment to their change, the inmates' internal motivation to follow the coaching will increase.

Caring leadership will ensure that the coaching program is not carried out uniformly, but is tailored to the psychological needs, social background, and individual capacity of each prisoner. This makes the coaching program more relevant, applicable, and has a direct impact on the readiness of prisoners' social reintegration after their sentence ends.

c. Reducing Stress and Violence Levels in Prisons

The correctional environment is naturally a place of psychological stress, for both inmates and officers. This pressure, if not anticipated with adaptive and supportive leadership, can trigger horizontal conflict, mental disorders, and even acts of violence.

Caring leaders understand these dynamics and take an active role in creating an emotionally friendly organizational climate. They encourage spaces for expression, religious activities, arts and sports activities, and discussion forums that allow inmates to release their mental burdens in a healthy way. As a result, stress levels are reduced, and violence can be minimized significantly.

d. Humanity-Oriented Organizational Culture Transformation

One of the long-term impacts of caring leadership is the formation of a more humanistic and inclusive organizational culture. The work culture in correctional institutions, which has tended to be formal, hierarchical and distant, can change to be more open, collaborative and concerned with the welfare of all existing elements.

This cultural transformation will encourage every level of officer to not only carry out their duties as an administrative obligation, but also as a form of humanitarian calling. This has implications for increasing the quality of service to inmates and opening up space for innovation in coaching practices.

e. Improving Public Reputation and Trust in Corrections

Correctional institutions often receive negative attention from the public, especially regarding issues of human rights violations, violence, or drug trafficking. The implementation of caring leadership is one of the effective

strategies to improve this image. When the public sees that correctional institutions are run humanely, fairly, and responsibly, the level of public trust will increase.

This trust is very important, especially in the context of reintegrating prisoners into society. Community support for ex-prisoners will grow as the belief that they have been well-educated and deserve a second chance increases.

f. Impact on Recidivism Reduction

One of the most obvious indicators of the success of prisoner development is the low recidivism rate. Caring leadership has a direct contribution to this. With an approach that touches on the psychological and social aspects of prisoners, as well as coaching based on potential and future hopes, the chances of prisoners returning to crime after release are reduced.

Caring leaders will facilitate post-release counseling, working with social services, businesses, and civil society to create employment opportunities, housing, and support systems. These are essential elements in preventing prisoners from returning to their old, problematic lifestyles.

Overall, caring leadership is not just a theoretical approach, but a practical and urgent need in the reform of Indonesia's correctional system. Its impact touches all aspects, from interpersonal relations to institutional systems, and creates a solid foundation for development that is just and oriented towards genuine behavioral change.

CONCLUSION

Caring leadership is a strategic and humane approach in the management of correctional institutions, which is able to change the paradigm of prisoner development from being purely repressive to being more transformative and oriented towards social rehabilitation. Based on the results of the discussion, the following important points can be concluded: caring leadership is rooted in a humanistic approach that views prisoners as individuals who still have the potential to change and return to contribute positively to society. Theories such as Transformational Leadership, Servant Leadership, and psychosocial approaches support the role of leaders as facilitators of behavioral change that focus on human values, dignity, and hope for the future.

The strategy for implementing caring leadership in the correctional environment includes various approaches, such as mapping the individual needs of inmates, empathetic and two-way communication, exemplary values of justice by leaders, cross-sector collaboration in implementing the guidance program, and the establishment of a more reflective and inclusive guidance evaluation system. In addition, attention to the welfare and capacity of correctional officers is also an integral part of this strategy.

The positive impact of caring leadership is very real and multidimensional, both internally and directly to inmates. Caring leadership can increase the effectiveness of the coaching program, create healthy relationships between officers and inmates, reduce conflict and stress in prisons, and encourage a more just and service-oriented organizational culture.

Furthermore, this approach has proven to be relevant in reducing recidivism rates, by facilitating more mature and sustainable social reintegration. Public trust in correctional institutions has also increased along with the realization of a transparent, fair, and humane guidance system.

Thus, it can be concluded that caring leadership is not just a leadership style, but a systemic need in Indonesian correctional reform. To achieve the ideal development

goals, it is time for every leader in the correctional environment to internalize the values of empathy, service, and humanity as the main foundation in carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

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