

HEALTH OF ELDERLY PRISONERS IN CLASS IIA BINJAI CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION



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ABSTRACT

This study examines the environmental factors affecting the health of elderly inmates at the Class IIA Correctional Institution in Binjai, recognizing that older prisoners represent a particularly vulnerable group within correctional settings. Using a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving elderly inmates and health workers. The analysis follows the Miles and Huberman model, supported by NVivo software. The findings reveal that environmental conditions significantly influence the health of elderly inmates. Poor air circulation contributes to respiratory and skin disorders, limited access to clean water increases the risk of urinary tract infections, and inadequate sanitation leads to the spread of infectious diseases. Additionally, overcrowding exacerbates psychological stress and overall well-being. The study draws on Abraham Maslow's theory of human needs and environmental stress concepts to highlight that unmet basic needs and stressful surroundings negatively impact health conditions. In conclusion, improving environmental quality within correctional facilities is essential to protect the health of elderly inmates. Systemic interventions are needed, including better sanitation, adequate water supply, improved ventilation, and more humane living conditions to support both physical and psychological well-being.

Keywords: *Elderly Prisoners; Health; Prison Environment; Basic Needs; Environmental Stress*

INTRODUCTION

Correctional Institution is an integral institution in the criminal justice system that has the responsibility to carry out law enforcement functions, especially in the treatment of detainees and prisoners. This is affirmed in Law No. 22 of 2022, which regulates correctional institutions as the final part in the chain of the criminal justice system, not just a place of detention, but a center for guidance and social reintegration. Within this framework, respect for the rights of prisoners is fundamental, including the right to health services and nutritious food as stated in Article 9 of the law.

As the number of prisoners increases from year to year, the capacity of correctional institutions faces significant pressure. Data from the Directorate General of Corrections shows the growth of the prison population in Indonesia between 2020 and 2024 as follows:



Source: Ditjenpas, December 2024

Figure 1
Growth in the Number of Prisoners 2020-2024

Of the total prisoner population, there are groups of prisoners who fall into the category of special needs, one of which is elderly prisoners. Referring to Law Number 13 of 1998 concerning Elderly Welfare, a person is classified as elderly if they have reached the age of 60 years or more. The elderly experience a decrease in physiological and psychosocial functions which makes them vulnerable to various degenerative diseases and mental disorders due to isolation and psychological pressure in the correctional system. This condition is exacerbated by the fact that the number of elderly prisoners continues to increase, in line with the increase in life expectancy and the application of long-term punishment in the legal system. In data from the Directorate General of Corrections in 2024, it was recorded that elderly prisoners reached 80 people, spread across various prisons in Indonesia:

Class IIA Binjai Correctional Facility in North Sumatra is one example of a prison that also accommodates elderly prisoners. Of the total population of 1,303 people, 35 are prisoners who are over 60 years old. This group shows vulnerability to various health complaints common in the elderly, such as upper respiratory tract infections (URTIs), digestive disorders, skin diseases, and pain complaints. Based on data from the Binjai Class IIA Prison Clinic, elderly prisoners consistently access medical services, with complaints that are recurrent and related to chronic or infectious conditions. This indicates that the capacity of health services in prisons is not fully able to answer the

medical needs of the elderly, which tend to be complex.

Table 1
Health Service Data for Elderly Prisoners

Month	Inmate				
	Name	Complaint	Therapy	Gender	Age
December 2024	SBM (deceased)	itch	ambroxol, dermatis, ctm, beta ointment	Male	66 years old
	SBM (deceased)	itch	ambroxol, dermatis, ctm, beta ointment	Male	66 years old
	SBM (deceased)	itch	ambroxol, dermatis, ctm, beta ointment	Male	66 years old
	AE	Cough	Ambroxol	Male	64
January 2025	DZAU	Headache, Gout	Amsef, saleb, ctm	Male	66 years old
	AE	Cough	Ambroxol	Male	64 Years
	SBM	Cough, itch	Ambroxol, ointment	Male	66 Years
February 2025	ES	Sickness+ Flu	ambroxol, antacids, ctm, beta ointment, Hufagrip	Male	62 years old
	HOSPITAL	Flu, Cough	Ambroxol, antacids, ctm, beta ointment, Amplodipine	Male	61 Years
	SBS	Upper back pain, Fever	amoxilin, antacid, la nso, curcuma	Male	65 years old

Source: Binjai Class IIA Prison Clinic, February 2025

In addition to medical aspects, elderly prisoners also face social and psychological challenges due to the limitations of the physical prison environment, limited social interaction, and the lack of special rehabilitation programs for the elderly. According to Kosberg & ACSW (2008) in Adiansyah (2017), elderly prisoners are more vulnerable to physical, psychological, and social losses, especially in an environment that does not support recovery. Therefore, it is important to understand the environmental factors in correctional institutions that have the potential to affect the health conditions of elderly prisoners. A physically, socially and emotionally unsupportive environment can worsen the health of older people while serving their sentence. Lack of medical facilities, lack of access to physical activities, and low social

interaction are crucial issues that require further attention. Starting from these problems, this study aims to analyze the influence of environmental factors in correctional institutions on the health of elderly prisoners.

The study was conducted at Class IIA Binjai Correctional Facility as a case study that represents a real challenge in fulfilling the basic rights of the elderly in a correctional environment. It is hoped that the results of this study can provide concrete recommendations in an effort to improve the health and welfare services of elderly prisoners in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several previous studies have shown the importance of inclusive health services that are responsive to the needs of elderly prisoners. Novryan and Subroto (2023) emphasized that elderly prisoners face challenges in accessing humane and adequate health services. The implementation of Minister of Law and Human Rights Regulation No. 32/2018 is a normative reference that needs to be enforced, but there are still structural obstacles such as limited facilities, policies, and human resources.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory emphasizes that each individual has five levels of basic needs: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 2013). In the context of elderly prisoners, the most basic needs - physiological needs such as food, adequate sleep, and access to health services - are often neglected due to the limitations of the correctional system.

At a later stage, the need for security becomes very important, especially for older people in crowded, noisy or unsupportive environments. If these two needs are not met, the fulfillment of social needs (such as interaction and affection), self-esteem, and self-actualization is almost impossible to achieve. Elderly people in prison, who do not receive proper health care and a safe environment, will find it difficult to achieve psychological and physical well-being. In practice, the inability of prisons to provide for these needs creates conditions that drastically reduce the quality of life of elderly prisoners. This is relevant to the main premise of this study, which is that the inability to meet basic needs in prisons directly correlates with a decline in the health status of elderly prisoners.

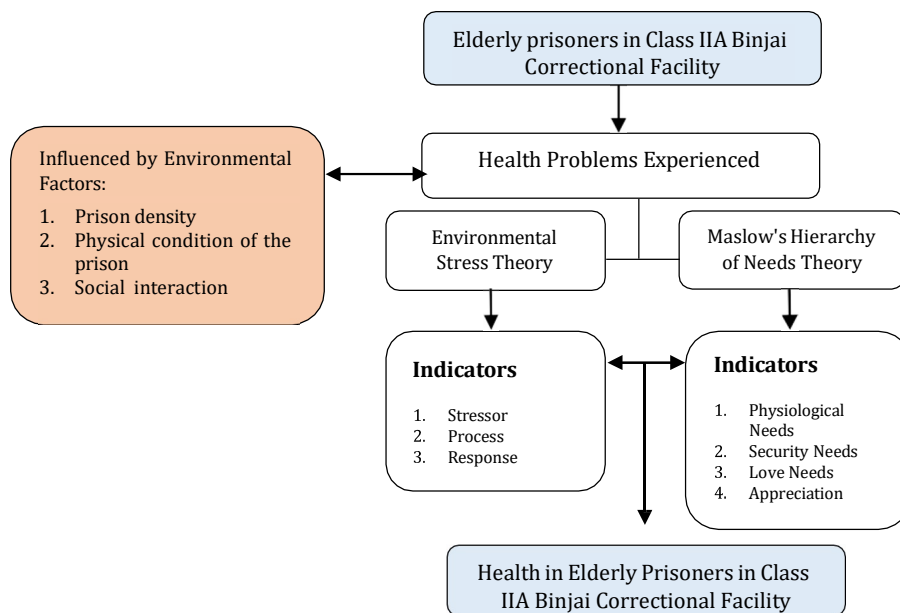
Environmental Stress Theory

Environmental stress theory highlights how stressors from the physical and social environment can affect a person's mental and physical state (Gaol, 2016). In the context of prisons, sources of stress can come from overcrowding, noise, lack of natural light, poor air circulation, and limited space and privacy. Elderly prisoners, who experience a decline in physiological and adaptive abilities, are the most vulnerable group to this kind of environmental pressure. According to Helmi (1999), individuals will experience negative stress if the source of pressure (stressor) exceeds their capacity to adapt. In a correctional environment, many elderly prisoners are unable to adapt effectively to chronic stress. As a result, various disorders such as sleep disorders, high blood pressure, anxiety disorders, and other degenerative diseases emerge that can worsen their health conditions. This theory strengthens the basis for the analysis that the environmental conditions of prisons are not just a setting for detention, but play an active role in creating stressful conditions that have a real impact on the health of elderly prisoners.

Framework for Thinking

This study examines how the condition of elderly prisoners is affected by environmental factors in correctional institutions, which are analyzed through Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory approach. The elderly, defined as individuals aged 60 years and above, belong to a vulnerable group but still have the possibility of becoming prisoners. In fact, this group does exist and is spread across various prisons in Indonesia. The main focus of this study is the challenges faced by elderly prisoners in the prison environment, especially the decline in physical condition that can be exacerbated by environmental conditions.

The environmental factors in question include physical aspects such as limited health facilities, residential rooms, and accessibility, and social aspects such as the lack of interaction with family and fellow prisoners. Problems such as overcapacity and cultural mixing in prisons also exacerbate these conditions. Taking into account Maslow's theory, the fulfillment of the basic needs of the elderly such as physiological needs, security, and social support becomes difficult to achieve under these conditions. Therefore, understanding the relationship between the correctional environment, needs theory and the health of older prisoners is crucial to designing more inclusive policies. A more conducive prison environment can help improve the well-being and accelerate the rehabilitation process for elderly prisoners. With the following research framework:



Source: Processed by Researchers, 2025

Figure 2
Framework of Thinking

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to deeply understand the conditions of elderly prisoners at the Class IIA Binjai Correctional Institution, especially regarding the influence of environmental factors on their health. This approach allows researchers to explore the experiences, perceptions, and meanings given by elderly prisoners in the natural context of their lives in prison, with reference to Maslow's

hierarchy of needs theory. Data sources were obtained through in-depth interviews with five elderly prisoners who regularly visited the prison clinic in the last three months, as well as two health workers as supporting sources. Secondary data were obtained from inmates' medical record documents containing a history of visits to the clinic, health complaints, and medical actions provided.

In addition, researchers also made direct observations of the physical environment, social dynamics, and internal prison policies that affect the lives of elderly prisoners. Data collection techniques were conducted through interviews, document studies, and observations. Interviews were conducted in a structured and in-depth manner using guidelines that had been tested for readability, to ensure clarity of questions for informants. Document studies were used to complement primary data, especially from medical records and other relevant administrative documents.

Direct observation was conducted to capture aspects that were not revealed through interviews, such as social behavior and the condition of prison facilities. The data obtained was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was done by grouping information based on themes using NVivo software. The reduced data was presented in narrative form, interview quotes, and tables.

Furthermore, conclusion drawing was carried out through interpretation of findings connected to theory and verified through source triangulation to ensure the validity of the research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conditions of the Residential Environment on the Health of Elderly Prisoners

The results showed that air quality and air circulation in the residential rooms of Class IIA Binjai Correctional Facility is one of the dominant factors that impact on the health of elderly prisoners. In-depth interviews with informants revealed that the lack of ventilation and overcrowding of rooms leads to high temperatures, excessive humidity and stale air. This leads to various health problems such as itching, skin infections, shortness of breath and fatigue. Inadequate fans and the number of inmates exceeding capacity further exacerbate these conditions. Data from the prison clinic reinforces this finding by showing an increasing trend of visits by elderly prisoners due to skin disease complaints during the rainy season. This finding is consistent with environmental stress theory, where physical stress from an unsupportive environment can trigger negative physiological and psychological responses. Elderly prisoners experience additional stress due to housing discomfort, potentially worsening their overall health condition. When linked to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, this condition indicates that basic physiological and security needs have not been met optimally, thus hindering the achievement of advanced psychological needs such as a sense of belonging and self-actualization. Thus, the management of air quality and movement space is an important aspect in creating a proper residential environment for elderly prisoners. Not only in terms of technical facilities, but also in terms of policies that must prioritize vulnerable groups in the correctional system.

Limited Access to Clean Water on Hygiene and Health

Another significant factor is limited access to clean water. Informants explained that clean water distribution is limited to a certain time and in minimal volume. Water is sometimes cloudy and smelly, which reduces the quality of personal hygiene. This makes it difficult for elderly prisoners to bathe, wash clothes and maintain the sanitation of the

room environment. As a result, many of them experience health complaints in the form of skin diseases, infections, and minor digestive problems due to the use of unhygienic water. This condition is exacerbated by the lack of supporting facilities such as smooth waterways, clean sewage systems, and adequate access to toilets. This problem reinforces the importance of fulfilling physiological needs in Maslow's theory. Clean water is a non-negotiable basic element, and its unavailability has a direct impact on the health and comfort of prisoners. In terms of environmental stress, lack of access to clean water is a negative stimulus that increases mental stress and reduces the quality of life of elderly prisoners. In the correctional context, the eligibility of sanitation facilities and clean water is a form of fulfillment of human rights that should be guaranteed by the state, including for groups of prisoners. Therefore, the provision of clean water should be a priority in improving the management of correctional institutions.

Poor Sanitation and Cleanliness of the Prison Environment

The aspect of environmental cleanliness is the third crucial issue. Based on observations and documentation, the residential rooms of elderly prisoners are often not cleaned regularly, with inadequate waste disposal facilities. Piles of garbage, damp floors, and unhygienic bathrooms are sources of the spread of bacteria and germs. Elderly prisoners, with weaker immune systems, are more susceptible to diseases originating from this unsanitary environment. These conditions result in diseases such as diarrhea, upper respiratory tract infections, and skin disorders. The lack of a clean environment reduces the comfort level of the dwelling and contributes to a decline in physical and mental health. Within the framework of environmental stress theory, this situation triggers prolonged stress that is difficult to relieve, especially in the elderly. If referring to Maslow's theory, the need for security and comfort is not met, thus inhibiting individuals from progressing to higher levels of need. Institutionally, the problem of poor sanitation also reflects weak supervision and inefficient management of infrastructure, which should be an important indicator in evaluating the performance of correctional institutions.

Overcapacity and its Impact on the Psychology of Elderly Prisoners

Overcapacity in Class IIA Binjai prison is also an important factor that worsens the condition of the residential environment. With the number of inmates exceeding the ideal capacity, social interaction becomes unbalanced and the space for prisoners to move is very limited. Elderly prisoners experience difficulties in obtaining personal space, face constant noise, as well as the risk of conflict between prisoners. This creates high psychological pressure, triggers emotional stress, and increases the risk of depression. Elderly people who need peace are faced with a noisy and stressful environment. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, elderly prisoners do not get a proper sense of safety and comfort. From the perspective of environmental stress theory, overcrowding creates social and physical pressures that increase the psychological burden on the elderly. Therefore, overcrowding is not only an administrative issue, but is also closely related to the mental and physical health of prisoners, especially the elderly. The solution to this problem is not only limited to the addition of physical capacity, but also the reorganization of housing and the implementation of differentiation policies that take into account the age and vulnerability of prisoners.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results of research conducted at the Class IIA Binjai Correctional Institution

on elderly prisoners, it was found that environmental factors at the Class IIA Binjai Correctional Institution have a significant impact on the health conditions of elderly prisoners. The hot, humid environment, with poor ventilation and minimal air circulation, causes respiratory problems and skin infections.

Limited access to clean water contributes to personal hygiene problems and increases the risk of urinary tract infections. Inadequate environmental sanitation also exacerbates the health conditions of the elderly. In addition, overcapacity accelerates the spread of disease and disrupts the comfort and psychological condition of prisoners. Based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, basic needs such as fresh air, clean water, and a safe environment have not been met. Meanwhile, in the perspective of Environmental Stress Theory, exposure to these non-ideal physical conditions becomes a stressor that triggers ongoing physical and emotional distress.

Overall, these findings confirm that an unsupportive correctional environment can worsen the quality of life and health of elderly prisoners. To improve the quality of health of elderly prisoners, it is recommended that the Class IIA Binjai Correctional Facility make improvements to the ventilation system, ensure the availability of proper clean water, and provide basic hygiene products adequately. Evaluating the number of inmates is also important to reduce overcrowding which exacerbates health conditions. Health workers are expected to routinely conduct periodic medical examinations of elderly prisoners to detect diseases related to the residential environment.

In addition, counseling on the importance of maintaining personal and environmental hygiene also needs to be carried out regularly. The government, especially the Ministry of Law and Human Rights and the Health Office, are expected to conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of prison conditions and provide special health services for elderly prisoners as a vulnerable group that requires more attention.

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