

THE IMPACT OF PLACING PRISONERS AND DETAINEES IN ONE ROOM



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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the impact of placing inmates and detainees in the same housing cells at the Class IIA Batam State Detention Center, which is experiencing significant overcrowding. The research uses a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collected through direct observation and in-depth interviews involving inmates, detainees, and correctional staff. The findings reveal that overcrowding combined with the mixing of inmates and detainees creates both physical and psychological pressure. These conditions lead to frustration, discomfort, and the emergence of aggressive behavior among occupants. The lack of separation based on legal status also contributes to tension and reduces the effectiveness of rehabilitation and supervision processes. Although preventive measures have been implemented, the main issues of overcapacity and inadequate classification of detainees have not been fully resolved. Therefore, more comprehensive policies are needed, particularly regarding proper housing classification and capacity management. Future research is recommended to further examine the effectiveness of separation policies and the impact of overcrowding on inmates' mental health within correctional institutions.

Keywords: Deprivation; Frustration-Aggression; Inmate Placement

INTRODUCTION

Various Technical Implementation Units for correctional facilities in Indonesia are still facing overcapacity issues. One of them is the Batam Class IIA Detention Center, which on February 7, 2025, had a recorded population of 1,076 people, consisting of 296 people with legal status as detainees and 780 people as convicts, while its capacity is only 476 people. This situation has forced the Batam Detention Center to house both inmates and detainees in the same living quarters.

Normatively, the policy of combining the living quarters of prisoners and detainees is not in accordance with international law, namely: Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. The Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (2015) stipulate that prisoners must be separated based on gender, age, type of crime, rehabilitation needs, and reasons for detention (detainees who have not yet been tried must be separated from convicted prisoners).

In addition, this issue is also important to study because overcapacity alone can trigger riots, especially when combined with the merging of prisoners and detainees in one living space. Throughout 2024 to 2025, there have been many cases of riots in prisons caused by overcapacity throughout Indonesia, which have gone viral on social media. One example is the riot and escape of inmates that occurred at the Kutacane Prison, Aceh, in May 2025 (Wangge, 2025). In addition, on June 2, 2025, there was also a riot and escape at the Nabire Class IIB Prison in Central Papua, where officers were injured as a result of the incident (Pulo, 2025). This shows that the issues of overcapacity and the suboptimal placement of inmates and detainees in a single cell are not merely administrative problems, but have become national issues that require attention and real solutions from various parties.

On the other hand, previous studies have focused more on the general impact of overcapacity, while studies that specifically examine the impact of placing prisoners and detainees together in one cell are still relatively limited. Based on this gap, this study focuses on the following key questions: (1) What are the impacts of placing prisoners and detainees in the same living quarters at the Batam Class IIA Detention Center; and (2) how can the negative impacts of this policy be prevented? The purpose of this study is to identify the forms of impact and map out the preventive measures that have been taken by the Batam Class IIA Detention Center.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study, the author uses two theories as the main analytical tools to read the field conditions in depth, namely the Deprivation Theory proposed by Gresham Sykes and the Frustration-Aggression Theory proposed by Dollard, et al. (1939). According to Sykes (1958), Deprivation Theory explains the "pains of imprisonment" experienced by prisoners or detainees, such as loss of freedom, limited access to goods or services, loss of heterosexual relationships, loss of autonomy, and loss of security, which can cause various psychological and social problems, thereby affecting their behavior in prison. Meanwhile, frustration-aggression theory states that frustration, which is the failure of individuals to achieve important goals or needs, can cause anger that leads to aggressive behavior (Dollard et al., 1939).

The deprivation theory and frustration-aggression theory interact with each other in explaining the phenomenon of violence in prisons resulting from the placement of prisoners and detainees in the same living quarters. Sykes' deprivation theory helps explain how conditions in prisons, such as loss of freedom, privacy, and sense of security, can cause mental stress for prisoners and detainees. This pressure, if it continues, can

cause frustration. At this point, Dollard and Berkowitz's frustration-aggression theory is useful for understanding that frustration that is not properly channeled can turn into aggressive behavior, such as fights between prisoners and detainees.

The combination of deprivation theory and frustration-aggression theory provides a deep understanding for analyzing violence in Batam Detention Center. Deprivation explains the structural roots that trigger perpetrators' motivations, while frustration-aggression theory identifies the situational conditions that enable violence to occur. This research is not only academically relevant, but also practical because its recommendations can be directed at improving prison conditions (e.g., redistribution of resources, increased surveillance in vulnerable locations) without changing capacity policies.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive design to explore and describe social phenomena at the research locus without testing causal relationships between variable components. This approach was chosen so that researchers could thoroughly capture the conditions, symptoms, and facts in the field related to the placement of prisoners and detainees in one residential room at the Batam Class IIA Detention Center.

Researchers used two data collection techniques: observation and in-depth interviews. Observation was conducted to capture the dynamics of resident interactions, daily activity patterns, and the physical condition of the rooms as a context for pressure and potential conflict, while interviews were conducted face-to-face with key and primary informants, using a question guide compiled based on the research focus. In the methodology section, interviews are defined as a direct communication technique that allows researchers to observe nonverbal aspects of informants to obtain authentic data.

The research was conducted at the Batam Class IIA Detention Center. Data collection was carried out in April 2025. Primary data sources were obtained through observation at the Batam Class IIA Detention Center and interviews with two categories of informants: (1) key informants, consisting of: the Head of the Batam Detention Center Security Unit and the Head of the Batam Detention Center Security Team; (2) primary informants, consisting of: prisoners and detainees who experienced the phenomenon of being placed in one room together. The number of informants in this study consisted of 1 Head of the Batam Detention Center Security Unit, 1 Head of the Batam Detention Center Security Team, 2 prisoners, and 2 detainees.

Credibility was strengthened through cross-checking between the narratives of the main informants (prisoners and detainees) and key informants (Batam Detention Center officers) as well as reading relevant institutional documents, a practice implicitly reflected in the use of various primary and secondary data sources in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Analysis

This study examines the impact of placing prisoners and detainees in the same cell using the Deprivation Theory proposed by Sykes (1958) and the Frustration-Aggression Theory proposed by Dollard et al. (1939). These two theories are relevant because they can explain the occurrence of frustration as a result of mixing prisoners and detainees. By exploring the deprivation of freedom, autonomy, and other basic needs, it is hoped that the factors that trigger frustration among prisoners and detainees can be identified through an analysis of the deprivation theory proposed by Sykes (1958). The discussion then continues with an analysis of how frustration can trigger aggressive behavior as a

form of venting the dissatisfaction experienced by inmates, as explained in the frustration-aggression theory by Dollard, et al (1939).

A. Deprivation Experienced by Prisoners and Detainees in Single Cells

1. Deprivation of Liberty

Field observations show that overcapacity forces prisoners and detainees to share cramped living quarters, with one room that should only accommodate 10 people forced to hold 25. As a result, occupants must share very limited space for rest and activities. This overcapacity not only causes physical discomfort, but also has the potential to cause health and psychological problems for detainees due to the lack of privacy and inadequate air circulation.

Prisoners and detainees also lose the opportunity to relieve stress, as evidenced by limited access to recreational areas and strict rules regarding recreation. Opportunities for recreation are only provided for two hours and are limited to a 15m x 3m corridor with no sunlight.

In the long term, if this condition is left unresolved, it can trigger health problems, reduce sleep quality, and increase the risk of conflict between residents. In addition, constant psychological pressure can lead to mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression.

2. Deprivation of Goods and Services

At Batam Detention Center, deprivation of goods and services is evident in limited access to communication. Prisoners and detainees can only communicate with people outside the detention center through telephone booths, so they are required to pay for each telephone service. The rate is 1,000 rupiah per minute. This is a burden for prisoners and detainees, as they all have different economic circumstances and not all of their families are able to visit them, meaning that communication can only be done by telephone. Restricted access to communication makes it difficult for detention center residents to maintain social relationships and receive emotional support from their families.

Deprivation of goods and services can also be seen in the inability of prisoners to meet their basic needs, such as cigarettes. In fact, Batam Detention Center already has a cooperative that provides various necessities for prisoners and detainees, including cigarettes. However, the prices of basic necessities sold by the Batam Detention Center cooperative are more expensive than market prices. Researchers compared the prices of cigarettes outside the detention center. It turns out that the prices at the detention center cooperative are around 20,000 rupiah more expensive per pack. Cigarettes are considered one of the most valuable items for prisoners and detainees. Cigarettes are not only a recreational necessity, but also a means of reducing stress and pressure during detention or imprisonment. Ultimately, the unavailability of cigarettes can trigger feelings of discomfort and increase stress levels.

Researchers also found that food and clean water were limited at Batam Detention Center. Observations showed that the food provided to prisoners and detainees was inadequate, as the rice was hard, and the side dishes and fruit were served in small and insufficient portions. Food of this quality is certainly far from adequate to meet the daily nutritional needs of prisoners and detainees. On the other hand, each room only receives two gallons of water and one bucket of hot water for drinking, which must be shared among 29 people. As a result, some prisoners and detainees are forced to drink tap water when the clean water supply is insufficient, causing many of them to experience health problems such as coughing and fever.

3. Deprivation of Heterosexual Relationships

Prisoners and detainees lose the opportunity to establish relationships or interact directly with the opposite sex while serving their sentences in detention centers. This is particularly felt by prisoners and detainees who have families, as longing for their spouses or children can be a source of real emotional stress. In addition, this can also trigger feelings of loneliness and isolation, as some prisoners and detainees admit that they have never been visited by their families or partners.

At a certain point, the limitations of heterosexual relationships can cause mental disorders and family problems. According to a statement by the Head of Security at Batam Detention Center, there are prisoners and detainees who exhibit crazy behavior, such as looking at their palms while talking on the phone as if they were on a video call, and requesting divorce during their detention or imprisonment. This reinforces the idea that the loss of heterosexual relationships is not merely the absence of physical interaction, but also the loss of vital emotional support, as it serves as one of the stress relievers in the high-pressure environment of the detention center.

4. Deprivation of Autonomy

At Batam Detention Center, it was found that there are two sets of rules governing the daily lives of prisoners and detainees: written rules established by Batam Detention Center and unwritten rules that exist among prisoners and detainees. These two sets of rules deprive prisoners and detainees of their ability to make decisions and act according to their own wishes.

Unwritten or informal rules, often referred to as “cell traditions.” Cell traditions arise due to gaps in the written rules and regulations established by the Batam Detention Center. For example, the detention center rules do not specify sleeping positions, so a cell tradition has developed whereby new arrivals always start sleeping at the back of the cell, closest to the toilet. When another new arrival joins, the previous sleeper moves to the middle, and so on.

Then, there is the tradition of “jatah ompreng” (food rationing), which applies to new inmates, whereby their food rations are immediately taken by inmates who have been in the cell longer. This can certainly cause psychological pressure for prisoners, such as chronic stress, depression, and potential conflicts between prisoners and inmates, because they do not accept the rules made by inmates to reinforce an unhealthy social hierarchy between inmates and prisoners.

5. Deprivation of Security

The sharing of living quarters by prisoners and detainees results in a social hierarchy, which creates a sense of vulnerability and even threat, especially for new detainees. Substantively, deprivation of security is the loss of a sense of safety due to having to share space with more dominant or dangerous individuals. Based on field observations, the dominance of prisoners can be seen in the form of intimidation and threats. This can be seen from the fact that prisoners often force detainees to give them cigarettes, food, sleeping mats, and other items. This happens because prisoners look down on detainees, feeling more powerful because they have been living in the living quarters longer. If left unchecked, this condition can worsen social relations among inmates at the Batam Detention Center, thereby hindering the rehabilitation process or trials, as inmates are more focused on defending themselves than participating in their ongoing trials.

B. Conflict between Prisoners and Detainees

According to J. Dollard, et al. (1939), psychological pressure resulting from failure to meet basic needs or experiencing continuous obstacles can trigger negative emotions, which are ultimately vented in the form of anger and other aggressive behaviors. This can be found in prisoners and detainees who are placed in a single room. The various forms of deprivation experienced by prisoners and detainees in a single room at the Batam Detention Center cause frustration. This frustration builds up and cannot be properly channeled, thus becoming a major trigger for aggressive behavior, often resulting in conflicts between prisoners and detainees.

Researcher found that intimidation and threats stemmed from accumulated frustration, namely: pressure from the prison environment, stress from family problems, and other issues. At that time, a medium or means of channeling frustration, such as cigarettes, was needed. Cigarettes in prison not only served as a consumable item, but also as a “medium of exchange” in place of money, and an escape from the pressure of the prison environment. When prisoners or detainees cannot fulfill this need, they tend to behave aggressively, such as intimidating other inmates to give them cigarettes as a form of venting their frustration. Ultimately, the struggle for personal necessities can escalate into open conflict and even physical fights between prisoners and detainees.

Field observations show that there is a social hierarchy among prisoners and detainees. Detainees are often considered “newcomers” who must adapt to unwritten rules or “cell traditions” that apply within the cell. On the one hand, prisoners tend to show their dominance and power because they feel they have been in the cell longer. This situation puts detainees in a vulnerable position, subject to intimidating treatment and verbal or nonverbal threats. One form of intimidation is the confiscation of detainees' food rations. Convicts confiscate food rations from detainees in the name of “cell tradition.” After investigation, it was found that the intimidation carried out by inmates towards prisoners was the result of accumulated frustration, because in the past they were also treated badly by previous inmates, so they felt that the environment was cramped and full of pressure. As a result, the relationship between inmates and prisoners is not always harmonious.

Amidst the social dynamics of prisoners and detainees in a stressful living space, not all prisoners or detainees respond to stress and conflict in the same way. Researchers also found passive responses, namely withdrawing from social interaction in the cell. This is done by detainees, especially new arrivals, who often choose to isolate themselves in their cells and are reluctant to mingle with other inmates. This passive attitude becomes a self-protection mechanism in facing situations that are considered frightening or stressful, as well as a reflection of their inability to deal with pressure openly.

C. Efforts to Prevent Negative Impacts of Placing Prisoners and Detainees in One Room at the Batam Class IIA Detention Center

1. Humanistic Approach and Active Supervision

The supervision of prisoners and detainees carried out by the security team at the Batam Detention Center is not passive, and every officer in the security team is emphasized to have empathy, so that they do not act indifferent towards the prisoners and detainees under their supervision. This empathy is manifested in the officers' ability to sense and understand the psychological condition of prisoners and detainees, making them more sensitive in detecting early signs of mental stress. In addition, officers also actively encourage prisoners and detainees

to be open and not to bottle up their problems, so that the accumulation of stress that can lead to aggressive behavior or riots can be prevented.

2. Routine Room Inspections

Based on the researchers' findings, Batam Detention Center has a policy called "One Day One Room." "One day one room" is a random room search conducted daily by Batam Detention Center security staff at irregular times. The aim is to prevent inmates from predicting or establishing patterns of inspections, thereby making them feel constantly monitored by staff and deterring them from violating the rules in effect at Batam Detention Center. Ultimately, this creates a safer and more conducive environment for all inmates and detainees.

3. Early detection

Early detection is a conflict prevention measure that involves identifying vulnerable points, individuals, items, and times. Vulnerable areas include block gates, room locks, ventilation, and room or prison wall barriers, as these parts are easier to infiltrate or damage. Therefore, officers must regularly check the condition of these areas to ensure they remain secure and undamaged. In addition, individuals who are considered vulnerable are those who have a significant influence among other inmates. The movements of these individuals need to be monitored closely because they have the potential to trigger disturbances or conflicts. Vulnerable items are those brought by visitors when visiting inmates, so all items entering must be checked to ensure there are no prohibited or dangerous items that could threaten the security of the detention center. Vulnerable times usually occur when officers become tired and less vigilant, especially after midnight. It is at this time that the risk of escape or security disturbances tends to increase.

4. Persuasive Communication

Persuasive communication is speech that aims to convince or influence others to behave or think in a certain way. In this case, Batam Detention Center officers must provide inmates and detainees with an understanding of the limited conditions at the detention center, so that mutual respect and patience are required during their detention or rehabilitation period at the Batam Detention Center.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that placing prisoners and detainees in one room at the Batam Class IIA Detention Center has various complex impacts on the occupants and security of the detention center. Based on deprivation theory, placement in one room causes prisoners and detainees to experience deprivation of freedom, which is characterized by limited movement, resulting in a decline in the quality of rest.

In addition, they also experience deprivation of goods and services, as seen in their limited access to basic necessities such as food, clean water, cigarettes, and communication facilities. Deprivation of heterosexual relationships is also a serious problem, as residents lose the opportunity to interact with their partners or families, triggering deep longing, isolation, and even family problems and emotional disturbances.

There is also deprivation of autonomy, where all activities of inmates are strictly regulated by detention center schedules, rules and regulations, and unwritten rules known as "cell traditions." This situation is exacerbated by security deprivation, where residents must always be alert to potential threats, extortion, intimidation, and violence from fellow residents, while protection from officers is still very lacking.

All forms of deprivation experienced by prisoners and detainees result in accumulated psychological pressure and frustration, followed by the inability to channel frustration and psychological pressure in a healthy manner, ultimately leading to aggressive behavior. Therefore, physical fights, fights over basic facilities, intimidation, forced taking of property, verbal aggression, and passive-aggressive behavior such as withdrawing from social interaction often occur.

In response to these negative impacts, Batam Class IIA Detention Center has implemented various preventive measures, such as active supervision, a humanistic approach, regular room raids, early detection of potential conflicts, and persuasive communication with prisoners and detainees. However, these measures can only reduce the frequency of conflicts and aggressive behavior. These efforts have not addressed the root of the main problem, namely overcapacity and the lack of separation between prisoners and detainees in the same living quarters.

Thus, this study emphasizes the importance of changing the room separation system, increasing staff capacity, improving the distribution of basic needs, and providing psychosocial services as long-term solutions to create a safer, more humane detention center environment that optimally supports the goal of rehabilitation.

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