

SELF-EMPOWERMENT OF INMATES THROUGH INDEPENDENCE DEVELOPMENT AS PREPARATION FOR REINTEGRATION INTO SOCIETY AT CLASS IIA CORRECTIONAL FACILITY PEKANBARU



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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the implementation of inmate self-empowerment through an independence coaching program, specifically a barista training program at the Class IIA Correctional Institution in Pekanbaru. The research focuses on how empowerment is formed and the obstacles encountered in the process, within the broader shift of Indonesia's correctional system toward a reintegrative approach. Using a qualitative case study method, data were collected through in-depth interviews with institutional leaders, instructors, and inmate participants, supported by observation and documentation. The findings show that self-empowerment is developed through two interconnected processes. First, through social learning based on Albert Bandura's theory, where inmates acquire barista skills through stages of attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. Second, through the looking-glass self concept by Charles Horton Cooley, where feedback from the social environment helps reshape inmates' self-perception from negative to more positive and confident identities. However, the empowerment process faces several challenges. Internal obstacles include low self-esteem and apathy influenced by stigma. Structural obstacles involve limited facilities, budget constraints, and the quality of instructors. External obstacles include persistent social stigma in the job market and the absence of structured post-release support or aftercare programs. In conclusion, independence coaching programs such as barista training have strong potential to foster inmate self-empowerment. However, their effectiveness depends on addressing internal psychological barriers, strengthening institutional capacity, and developing sustainable reintegration support systems after release.

Keywords: *Self-Empowerment; Inmates; Independence Coaching; Social Reintegration; Correctional Institution*

INTRODUCTION

Corrections is a penal system that has undergone a fundamental shift from the philosophies of retribution, deterrence, and resocialization, in which punishment is no longer intended to inflict suffering as retaliation, is not aimed at creating deterrence through pain, and no longer views the convicted as individuals lacking socialization (Michael, 2015). The correctional system in Indonesia, formerly known as the prison system, has a long history dating back to the colonial era, when prisons were used to control and punish those considered to be resisting colonial power. The main purpose at that time was to restrict individual freedom and isolate inmates from society, as reflected in the inhumane prison conditions and the lack of rehabilitation programs (Istyana et al., 2016). As time progressed, this paradigm gradually shifted from a retributive approach to a rehabilitative one (Ma'ruf, 2023). One of the key figures behind this transformation was Dr. Sahardjo, who, in his speech at the Lembang Conference, emphasized that corrections should not be seen as an act of revenge. Instead, it is a means to protect society from potential offenses committed by convicts while simultaneously restoring them as productive and responsible members of the community (Sulhin, 2022).

The correctional system implemented in Indonesia emphasizes a reintegration-oriented approach that focuses on behavioral rehabilitation, skill development, and the preparation of inmates to become productive members of society upon their release (Eryansyah, 2021). This approach is considered appropriate as it prioritizes rehabilitation and social reintegration, which are believed to facilitate inmates' return as useful individuals within their communities (Isfannoury, 2020). It also serves as a response to the previous prison system, which was proven ineffective in preventing crime and, in many cases, violated human rights (Suparta, 2017). Social reintegration itself is the core of the correctional system, aiming to restore the lives, relationships, and livelihoods of inmates (Yulianto, 2021). This process encompasses physical, mental, emotional, and social aspects, not only preparing inmates practically for life after release but also helping them overcome trauma, stress, or mental health issues resulting from incarceration. Additionally, it seeks to rebuild positive relationships with family, friends, and the wider community (Sudirman & Sulhin, 2019).

Social reintegration is therefore a crucial step to ensure that inmates can once again play a productive role in society and avoid future criminal behavior. In practice, one of the most essential implementing units is the Correctional Institution (Lapas), which, according to Harsono (1995), is a system of treatment for inmates within a facility that aims to educate, rehabilitate, and restore individuals who have violated the law. Lapas differs from traditional prisons as it focuses on the guidance and reintegration of inmates, providing them with opportunities to develop physically, mentally, and socially so that they can positively contribute to society after serving their sentence (Harsono, 1995). Rehabilitation programs within Lapas are designed not only to enhance technical and professional skills but also to foster psychological and social aspects such as self-confidence, independence, and social responsibility (Samara et al., 2024).

The implementation of self-reliance development programs for inmates is carried out through an approach that focuses on mastering practical skills applicable in everyday life. As emphasized by Dewey (1938), education should serve as a tool to prepare individuals to play an active and positive role in society not merely as a means of transferring knowledge, but also as a way to equip individuals with the skills needed to adapt and function effectively. In this context, self-reliance programs aim to equip inmates with social, technical, and psychological skills to prepare them for reintegration into society (Dewey, 1938). Zimmerman (1995) adds that self-empowerment through

education and rehabilitation not only encourages behavioral change but also gives individuals greater control over their own lives. Meanwhile, Bandura (1997) highlights the importance of self-efficacy—the belief in one’s ability to succeed—which is crucial for inmates as they rebuild confidence to face life after incarceration. Through training in areas such as communication, financial management, and vocational skills, these programs help restore self-confidence and create opportunities for inmates to contribute positively to their communities.

This approach aligns with Rappaport’s (1987) empowerment theory, which emphasizes the importance of individuals having control over life decisions and strengthening their capacity to face challenges. Harsono (1995) also underscores the significance of self-reliance development as an integral part of inmate rehabilitation, enabling them to live independently after release. Similarly, Sufahri (2018) shows that training in work skills, financial management, and psychological support significantly enhances inmates’ readiness for post-prison life. Furthermore, Maruna (2001) argues that successful reintegration requires support from the correctional system, families, and society, with key elements including decent employment, avoidance of criminal behavior, and the building of positive social relationships. However, challenges such as stigma, discrimination, and employment difficulties often hinder this process and may lead inmates back into the criminal justice system (Visser et al., 2004). Therefore, self-reliance programs that emphasize skill development and psychological empowerment are essential components for achieving successful social reintegration.

Self-empowerment through practical skills is a crucial element of the philosophy of self-empowerment as articulated by Sen (1999) in *Development as Freedom*, which emphasizes that every individual has the right to access opportunities that enable them to grow and reach their full potential. In the context of correctional systems, such empowerment aims to equip inmates with the ability to utilize their potential in social and economic life after their rehabilitation period. It also seeks to provide them with freedom from dependency, freedom to choose a better future, and freedom to contribute once again to society. This concept aligns with Law No. 22 of 2022 on Corrections, which states that the objectives of correctional services include the protection of inmates’ rights, the enhancement of personality and self-reliance, and the protection of society from recidivism (Article 2).

Furthermore, its implementation must be based on the principles of humanity, non-discrimination, mutual cooperation, and self-reliance (Article 3). According to Articles 35–39, inmate rehabilitation includes both personality development and self-reliance training, with the latter encompassing activities that produce goods and services with added value to support the social reintegration process. Additionally, Government Regulation No. 99 of 2012 regulates the implementation of inmates’ rights, such as remission, assimilation, and conditional release (Article 34), which are granted only to inmates who demonstrate good behavior and actively participate in rehabilitation programs. The regulation also requires cooperation with law enforcement agencies and participation in deradicalization programs for those convicted of serious crimes (Article 34A). Moreover, Article 39 highlights the importance of productive activities in self-reliance development to build skills that are relevant beyond incarceration. In line with this, the Mandela Rules (2015) emphasize that inmate rehabilitation should include education and vocational training tailored to labor market needs, ranging from technical, managerial, and social skills to life skills that support the adaptation process after release.

A study conducted by Batubara et al., (2024) highlights the crucial role of correctional institutions in shaping inmates’ character through rehabilitation programs,

aiming to analyze their effectiveness in improving inmates' personality development and self-reliance. The research employs a normative juridical approach to examine relevant regulations and concludes that, although rehabilitation programs have a positive impact, their success is hindered by challenges such as overcrowding, inadequate facilities and instructors, and social stigma toward inmates.

Therefore, the study recommends enhancing collaboration, infrastructure, and community involvement to better support reintegration efforts. The importance of inmate empowerment through education and skills training is in line with human rights principles, which guarantee every individual the right to develop and access education according to their potential. Skill-based rehabilitation programs not only improve inmates' technical abilities in the short term but also equip them with the capacity to support themselves and their families after reintegration into society.

The novelty of this study lies in its in-depth understanding of how self-reliance development can empower inmates as essential preparation for social reintegration. This differs from previous studies, which predominantly focused on technical skills or general behavioral rehabilitation. The focus of this research is on enhancing inmates' self-confidence, independence, and ability to function productively in society after serving their sentences. It also explores implementation challenges, such as limited facilities, scarce resources, and persistent social stigma, which significantly affect reintegration outcomes. With empowerment- and skills-based rehabilitation programs, inmates are expected to overcome post-incarceration challenges and transform into individuals who contribute positively to society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several previous studies are relevant to the discussion on self-empowerment of inmates through independence development at Class IIA Correctional Facility Pekanbaru. A study by Jihan et al., (2024) highlights how skills training programs at Class IIB Correctional Facility in Solok City enhance inmates' ability for social reintegration through self-reliance development, which provides entrepreneurial skills, and personality development, which improves attitudes and rebuilds self-esteem. The programs offered include flower arrangement, sandal making, culinary training, welding, and hydroponics. Zakirah (2022) focuses on the self-reliance development of female inmates at Class III Correctional Facility in Lhoknga, Aceh Besar, which involves vocational training and personality development. However, this study also identifies several challenges, such as inmates' low participation, limited facilities, and lack of follow-up, and connects the rehabilitation approach with the goals of Islamic penal philosophy.

Meanwhile, Kawer and Anwar (2024) examine the effectiveness of self-reliance programs for inmates under assimilation at Class IIB Correctional Facility in Biak, demonstrating that training activities such as car washing, paving block production, and woodworking significantly improve not only inmates' technical skills but also their psychosocial aspects, including self-confidence and responsibility. Nonetheless, the study notes limitations related to infrastructure, availability of instructors, and differences in inmates' characteristics.

Overall, these studies are relevant because they emphasize the empowerment of inmates for successful social reintegration, even though their focuses differ. Jihan et al. and Kawer & Anwar concentrate more on technical skill development, Zakirah specifically addresses female inmates and the Islamic penal context, while the present study will emphasize self-empowerment and psychosocial aspects in a more holistic manner.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method, which, according to Creswell (2008), focuses on developing an in-depth understanding of social phenomena, behaviors, or specific conditions within their natural context. The primary goal of this approach is to explore the experiences and perspectives of individuals or groups rather than to test hypotheses or measure variables statistically. Qualitative research relies on descriptive and narrative data obtained through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation, allowing researchers to capture interactions, attitudes, and perceptions as they occur in real-life settings. This approach also enables a deeper analysis of patterns and themes that emerge during the research process.

The research adopts a descriptive qualitative design, which, as explained by Sekaran (2006) and Creswell (2008), facilitates a comprehensive exploration of the studied phenomena within their natural environment. Data collection in this study involved multiple methods, including interviews, observations, and document analysis, all aimed at building a holistic understanding of the subject matter and ensuring the validity and relevance of the findings. The data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Purposive sampling was used to select participants based on specific criteria to ensure the representativeness of the data. Primary data were gathered through face-to-face interviews, participatory observations, and documentation involving key informants such as the Head of the Guidance Section, rehabilitation staff, and inmates at Class IIA Correctional Facility Pekanbaru. Secondary data, on the other hand, were collected through a literature review of relevant books, legal regulations, academic publications, and other supporting documents.

The techniques used for data collection included interviews to obtain detailed insights from participants, observations to systematically document the phenomena under study, and documentation to gather supporting evidence from records, archives, and official reports. The collected data were then analyzed using a qualitative approach based on the interactive analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman (1992). This model consists of four stages: data collection, where relevant information is gathered from various sources; data reduction, where information is filtered, categorized, and organized; data display, where findings are presented visually using tables, charts, or diagrams; and conclusion drawing and verification, where patterns, trends, and relationships among data are identified and interpreted. Through these stages, the research findings were analyzed and interpreted comprehensively and systematically to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, in line with the study's objectives (Sugiyono, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the Implementation of Inmate Self-Empowerment Using Social Learning Theory and the Looking-Glass Self Theory

The analysis in this section focuses on exploring the success of the barista training program by highlighting both the acquisition of practical skills and the positive impacts experienced by inmates, through two interrelated layers of analysis. The first layer emphasizes the process of skill acquisition itself, using Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory as the analytical framework. Its four core components Attention, Retention, Reproduction, and Motivation serve as a basis for explaining the transformation of inmates from beginners into individuals skilled in coffee brewing. The second layer focuses on the psychological impact of this successful learning process. Here, Charles Horton Cooley's Looking-Glass Self Theory is employed to illustrate how social

recognition of the inmates' newly acquired skills reflects and reshapes their self-perception, reduces internalized stigma, and ultimately fosters self-empowerment.

Table 1
Research Informant Data

No	Informant	Code
1	Head of Inmate Guidance Division, Class IIA Pekanbaru Correctional Facility	KB
2	Rehabilitation Staff, Class IIA Pekanbaru Correctional Facility	SP
3	Inmate	N1
4	Inmate	N2
5	Inmate	N3

The Process of Fostering Independence as a Form of Social Learning (Analysis using Bandura's Theory)

Attention

According to Bandura, learning requires attention from the learner toward a model or stimulus. In the context of a correctional facility where daily routines and distractions are prevalent the success of a program largely depends on its ability to capture and sustain inmates' attention. Findings from the barista training program demonstrate that the program's modern and relevant appeal is a key factor in successfully focusing inmates' attention. The program is deliberately designed to align with current lifestyle trends and target younger inmates, thereby creating a sense of novelty compared to more traditional self-reliance activities. Even initial skepticism, such as that expressed by inmate N2, who initially dismissed the coffee training as merely "a show-off activity," ultimately highlights the program's success in standing out and attracting their interest amidst other activities. Its uniqueness and relevance serve as a powerful attention magnet, prompting inmates to pay closer attention and start considering the value of the skills being taught. A second factor influencing attention is the strategy used by the instructor as a model. SP, the trainer, not only teaches technical skills passively but also actively engages inmates' interest through a personalized approach and the use of visual media such as Instagram and TikTok videos. These visualizations of the excitement and aesthetics of the barista profession make the program more tangible and appealing, while simultaneously portraying the profession as "cool" and promising. This approach successfully shifts inmates' attitudes from apathy to curiosity, making them more willing and prepared to participate in the learning process.

Retention

Once inmates' attention has been successfully captured, the next stage in social learning is retention, which refers to the ability to store the observed information or skills in memory. In the context of the barista training program, retention relies not only on cognitive memory such as memorizing recipes but also on motor memory (muscle memory), which is developed through practice and repetition. Research findings indicate that hands-on practice and repetition are the primary methods used to strengthen retention. As SP emphasized, repeated practice is essential to mastering key skills such as grinder calibration and tamping consistency, while N1 noted that limited practice time hindered their ability to remember and master the techniques taught. The inmates' ability to recall and perform various barista techniques ranging from grinder calibration to milk steaming demonstrates that the skills training process is effective, consistent with the findings of Jihan et al. (2024) and Kawer & Anwar (2024), who highlight the success of self-reliance programs in correctional facilities in enhancing inmates' technical

competencies. However, the retention process faces structural challenges, particularly the limited number of espresso machines, which restricts the frequency of practice and repetition. This limitation can slow down the development of both motor and cognitive memory, underscoring the need for facility adjustments to optimize the retention process and maximize learning outcomes.

Reproduction

The reproduction stage in social learning emphasizes inmates' ability to perform and demonstrate the skills they have acquired. In the context of the barista training program, this stage is reflected in the hands-on process of making coffee—from grinding the beans to serving it in a cup. Research findings reveal that inmates have begun to successfully apply what they have learned. For example, N1 stated that he can now “make coffee that truly tastes good.” This process involves a series of trial and error steps, continuously refined through feedback provided by the instructor (SP), who evaluates and guides inmates' actions until they meet the expected standards. Through this iterative process, theoretical knowledge is effectively translated into practical skills. The inmates' success in the reproduction phase demonstrates the program's effectiveness in improving practical work competencies while simultaneously building self-confidence. Inmates are not only able to understand theoretical concepts but can also apply them in real-world practice, as observed by SP, who noted improvements in espresso extraction consistency and N1's ability to steam milk properly. These findings align with Oktaviani and Dasa Putri (2024), who argue that practical skills training is highly effective in empowering inmates, as well as Kawer and Anwar (2024), who found that such programs enhance psychosocial aspects, including self-confidence. Thus, the reproduction stage serves as a crucial foundation for inmate self-empowerment through the mastery of practical vocational skills.

Motivation

The final stage in Social Learning Theory, motivation, is a crucial determinant of whether the learned behavior will be consistently performed over time. In the context of the barista training program at Class IIA Pekanbaru Correctional Facility, motivation arises from two primary sources. The first source is external reinforcement, particularly social appreciation from correctional officers. As noted by N2, even a simple compliment like “Wow, that's awesome!” after successfully creating a latte art design provides immense joy and significantly boosts self-confidence. Moreover, external motivation is also driven by future-oriented rewards, such as N3's dream of opening his own coffee shop after release, which inspires him to work diligently toward long-term goals. The facility's success in fostering this external motivation highlights the vital role of correctional institutions in empowering inmates, as analyzed by Batubara et al. (2024). The second source of motivation stems from internal reinforcement or self-reinforcement—the satisfaction and pride inmates feel upon achieving something themselves. They experience a strong sense of accomplishment when they brew a delicious cup of coffee or create impressive latte art, which serves as a psychological reward and reinforces their self-worth. This internal motivation plays a key role in driving self-empowerment and helps overcome issues such as inmate inactivity, as identified by Lisanun Zakirah (2022). Through the combination of external and internal motivation, all four stages of Social Learning Theory—Attention, Retention, Reproduction, and Motivation—function effectively within the barista program. Consequently, skill acquisition goes beyond technical competence, becoming a foundation for a transformative shift in how inmates

perceive themselves, a process that can further be analyzed through the Looking-Glass Self Theory.

The Formation of Self-empowerment as a Looking-Glass Self Process (Analysis using Cooley's Theory)

Self-Perception Shaped by Others' Judgments

According to Cooley, the process of identity transformation begins with the stage of self-perception shaped by others' judgments, which refers to an individual's perception of how they appear in the eyes of others through an imaginative process of "reading" others' thoughts. For inmates, the social mirror they face daily often reflects a negative image due to social stigma, such as being labeled as "criminals" or "failures" (Batubara et al., 2024). The barista training program fundamentally transforms this perception, allowing them to be seen instead as "future baristas" or "coffee makers," and to start imagining new judgments from trainers and fellow inmates. N2's experience—receiving the compliment "Wow, that's cool!" after creating their first latte art—illustrates how positive external judgments shape a new version of the self, transforming their identity from "inmate" to "skilled coffee maker." This becomes the foundational step in changing their self-concept. Thus, the independence development program provides inmates with a new "costume" and "role," enabling them to imagine a more positive self-image, fulfilling the first stage of the Looking-Glass Self and supporting their initial steps toward social reintegration.

Feelings Toward Others' Reactions

After imagining the positive judgments of their social environment, the second stage of Cooley's *Looking-Glass Self* involves the emotional reaction or feelings that arise in response to those imagined evaluations — a psychological "fuel" that drives changes in self-concept. For incarcerated individuals participating in the barista program, this process is clearly reflected in N2's experience: when he received praise for his latte art, he felt "extremely happy," an emotional validation that replaced his previous feelings of inferiority and negative self-image. This sense of pride and increased self-confidence, as highlighted by Kawer and Anwar (2024), becomes the core of psychosocial growth among inmates following empowerment programs. This second dimension acts as a form of reinforcement: if the first stage is about imagining how others perceive them, the second stage is about feeling and internalizing those perceptions as positive emotions. These emotions then serve as a crucial bridge toward forming a new self-concept — one that is more confident, empowered, and ready to reintegrate into society.

Formation of a New Self-Concept

The final stage of the Looking-Glass Self process is the formation of a new self-concept, where repeated exposure to positive judgments and feelings of pride crystallize into a deep-seated belief that inmates are capable and valuable individuals. This transformation is evident in the structured future plans of participants—for instance, N3 intends to work in a café to gain experience before opening his own coffee shop, signaling the adoption of an identity as a professional in the coffee industry. Similarly, N1 begins to see himself as a mentor to fellow inmates, while N2 reinterprets his "dirty hands" as hands capable of creating something others enjoy, reinforcing his confidence and sense of usefulness. The emergence of this productive self-concept serves as the psychological foundation for attitudinal change and successful social reintegration, aligning with the findings of Jihan et al. (2024) and Oktaviani & Putri (2024), which highlight improvements in personal and

social skills. Thus, the three dimensions of the Looking-Glass Self—constructing a new appearance, interpreting social reactions, and experiencing pride—comprehensively explain how the barista training program fosters self-empowerment, producing a renewed identity that becomes a crucial psychological asset for inmates as they face challenges beyond prison walls.

Analysis of the Obstacles in Implementing Inmate Self-Empowerment

After analyzing the mechanisms behind the program's success in fostering self-empowerment, the focus now shifts to the barriers that may delegitimize or reduce the effectiveness of that empowerment process—because a program cannot be fully evaluated without understanding the challenges it faces. Interestingly, the same theoretical frameworks—Social Learning Theory and the Looking-Glass Self Theory—can be used to explain why and how these obstacles emerge. Social Learning Theory helps identify which stages of the learning process—Attention, Retention, Reproduction, and Motivation—are disrupted, while Looking-Glass Self Theory explains how a negative “social mirror”, particularly in the form of stigma, can override the program's positive reflections and hinder the formation of an empowered self-concept. This analysis examines internal, structural, and external barriers based on field data and connects them with previous research, such as limited resources identified by Kawer and Anwar and the pervasive social stigma highlighted by Batubara et al. (2024). Together, these insights provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges within the correctional system.

1. Obstacles from the Perspective of Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory is not only useful for analyzing the success of a program but also highly effective in diagnosing points of failure, as each obstacle can be mapped onto the four stages of the learning process: Attention, Retention, Reproduction, and Motivation. Field findings reveal that internal barriers such as apathy and social pressure can diminish both attention and motivation, while structural obstacles—such as limited facilities and the quality of instructors—disrupt retention and reproduction. Inconsistent training schedules and inadequate equipment further hinder inmates' ability to practice new skills, preventing the overall learning process from functioning optimally.

a) Failure of Attention and Motivation

The most fundamental obstacles in the social learning process within the correctional environment often occur at the stages of attention and motivation, which frequently fail simultaneously due to their interrelated nature: if inmates do not perceive any meaningful reward, they are unlikely to give sufficient attention. The failure of attention is evident in N2's skeptical and apathetic attitude toward the barista program, which was initially dismissed as “just for show” or merely a formality. This skepticism created a cognitive barrier that blocked the learning process even before it began. The failure of motivation is further exacerbated by internal social pressures, such as peer ridicule, which act as a form of social punishment and reduce the incentive to participate. In such cases, praise from officers feels insufficient to outweigh the risk of mockery. The combination of program skepticism and social punishment effectively extinguishes both attention and motivation, explaining the phenomenon of “inmate inactivity” identified by Zakirah (2022) — not as mere

laziness, but as a logical response to an environment that provides no reason to be motivated and instead imposes negative consequences.

b) Difficulty in Reproduction

The next major obstacle in the social learning process emerges during the Reproduction stage, where inmates — despite having adequate attention, memory, and motivation — still struggle to practice and reproduce the skills they have learned due to external constraints, particularly the lack of facilities. In the barista training program, for instance, the availability of only a single espresso machine and grinder for a large number of participants creates long queues and significantly limits practice opportunities. As a result, inmates like N1 find it difficult to “train their hands” and develop the muscle memory needed to master fine motor skills such as tamping coffee or steaming milk. This situation reinforces the findings of Kawer and Anwar (2024), who argue that inadequate facilities represent a systemic barrier to independence-building programs in correctional institutions, leading to a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical proficiency that should ideally be achieved. Moreover, from the perspective of Looking-Glass Self Theory, a subtler barrier arises when the “positive mirror” provided by the rehabilitation program clashes with the “negative social mirror” of societal stigma toward former inmates (Batubara et al., 2024). This conflict between the two mirrors often triggers feelings of pessimism and reinforces old negative self-concepts. The absence of comprehensive post-release support programs (Zakirah, 2022) further strengthens the dominance of this negative mirror, making it difficult for inmates to sustain the self-empowerment they developed during the training once they reenter society.

2. Obstacles from the Perspective of the Looking-Glass Self Theory

If Social Learning Theory helps us understand the barriers to skill acquisition, then Looking-Glass Self Theory enables us to analyze a subtler but highly impactful obstacle: the failure of identity transformation. This failure occurs when the “positive mirror” created by rehabilitation programs — such as praise from instructors or a sense of pride — collides with the much larger and often negative “social mirror” of the outside world. The struggle between these two mirrors ultimately determines whether self-empowerment can endure after release. The strength of this “negative mirror” is rooted in the social stigma attached to former inmates, which Batubara et al. (2024) identify as a fundamental challenge. From Cooley’s perspective, such stigma generates a “psychological vicious cycle” in which inmates imagine negative societal judgments, triggering feelings of pessimism and reinforcing their old negative self-concepts — even after acquiring new skills. The absence of post-release support programs, as highlighted by Lisanun Zakirah (2022), further amplifies the dominance of this negative mirror, making it more difficult for former inmates to sustain the identity transformation necessary for successful reintegration.

a) Negative and Persistent Social Mirror

The most fundamental barrier to inmates’ identity transformation is the power of a negative and persistent “social mirror.” While rehabilitation programs provide a positive mirror within the internal environment of the correctional facility — through praise from instructors and recognition from peers — this mirror is often temporary and localized. Upon reentering society, inmates face

a much larger social mirror that continues to reflect a negative image of them as “criminals.” The first dimension of the Looking-Glass Self — imagining others’ judgments — is clearly illustrated by N3’s anxiety over potential rejection from customers due to his criminal record and tattoos, as well as N1’s fear of being turned down by employers after they see his criminal background check (SKCK). The mirror they encounter reflects their past legal identity rather than their newly acquired skills. This phenomenon represents the psychological manifestation of social stigma, which significantly obstructs reintegration (Batubara et al., 2024). The stigma seeps into their cognitive processes, shaping a persistent negative self-image. The strength of this negative mirror is even acknowledged by prison authorities. KB emphasized that issues of employer trust and customer comfort remain real and pressing challenges, demonstrating that N3’s fears are not mere illusions but a rational anticipation of actual societal realities. As a result, the initial stage of forming a new identity is disrupted, laying the foundation for the feelings of pessimism discussed in the next section.

b) Dominance of Pessimistic Feelings

The negative social mirror directly triggers the second dimension of Cooley’s Looking-Glass Self — the emotional response — where inmates who once felt pride and optimism during the rehabilitation process become dominated by pessimism, fear, and anxiety. N3, for instance, expressed that difficulties in obtaining business capital due to his status as a former inmate made him feel “confused and sometimes pessimistic again,” illustrating how the positive emotions built during the program can quickly erode when confronted with harsh external realities. Similarly, N1 admitted feeling “afraid that after hoping too much, I’ll just fall again,” revealing a crippling anxiety that undermines the confidence expected to result from psychosocial interventions (Kawer & Anwar, 2024). This dominance of pessimistic emotions is further exacerbated by the absence of structured post-release support systems, leaving former inmates to confront fear and anxiety on their own (Zakirah, 2022). As a result, the Looking-Glass Self process is interrupted: the internalization of negative judgments fuels pessimism, preventing the formation of a new, empowered self-concept. Consequently, inmates often fall back into their old identities as “failures,” and the goal of self-empowerment remains unfulfilled.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the analysis and discussion, the following conclusions can be drawn: the implementation of self-empowerment among inmates through the independence development program (a case study of barista training) at Class IIA Correctional Facility Pekanbaru occurs through two interrelated processes: the social learning process and the identity formation process.

From the perspective of Social Learning Theory (Bandura), the program successfully captures inmates’ attention due to its novelty. Skills are then internalized through retention, reinforced by repeated practice. Inmates are subsequently able to reproduce these skills physically (e.g., making coffee). This process is driven by motivation, both from external reinforcement (praise) and internal reinforcement (a sense of pride).

From the perspective of identity formation (Looking-Glass Self Theory), mastering barista skills becomes a new “appearance” for the inmates. They begin to imagine positive

evaluations from their environment (staff and peers). These imagined evaluations generate feelings of pride and confidence, gradually eroding feelings of inferiority. Ultimately, these positive emotions crystallize into a new self-concept — transforming from a “failed inmate” into a “skilled individual with a future” — which is the essence of self-empowerment.

There are three major layers of obstacles in the implementation of inmate self-empowerment through the independence development program at Class IIA Pekanbaru Correctional Facility: a) Internal Barriers: Originating from within the inmates themselves, including apathy and skepticism at the beginning of the program, mental blocks and feelings of unworthiness due to internalized stigma, as well as negative social pressure from fellow inmates, b) Structural Barriers: Originating from institutional limitations, including budget constraints that result in insufficient facilities (e.g., only one espresso machine available) and the quantity and quality of trainers, many of whom are not specialized professional instructors in their field, and c) External Barriers: Challenges imagined or expected after release, including fears of social stigma in the service industry where direct customer interaction is required, doubts about the competitiveness of their skills in the labor market, and the absence of post-release support systems (after-care) — particularly regarding access to capital and professional networks.

Based on the conclusions drawn from the results of this research and the preceding discussion, the researcher proposes several recommendations that are expected to serve as valuable input and consideration for relevant stakeholders. These recommendations are addressed to the Class IIA Pekanbaru Correctional Facility, the government at higher levels, and future researchers.

Given the structural barriers related to facilities and instructor quality, the correctional facility is advised to proactively establish partnerships (MoUs) with external parties. Collaborations with barista associations, prominent local coffee shops, or culinary vocational schools (*SMK Tata Boga*) in Pekanbaru can help bring in guest instructors, secure equipment donations, or even create internship opportunities for inmates nearing release. This aligns with the findings of Oktaviani and Putri (2024), which highlight the importance of cooperation with external institutions.

To address internal barriers such as apathy and peer ridicule, the socialization process of the program needs to be strengthened. The correctional facility could involve program alumni who have successfully reintegrated or current participants showing significant progress as role models or living testimonials. This peer-to-peer approach may be more effective in capturing inmates’ interest and overcoming initial skepticism.

To compensate for the limited expertise of internal trainers who may not hold professional certifications, it is recommended that a structured and modular training curriculum be developed. A clearly designed module will help standardize instruction and ensure that all essential foundational material is delivered effectively to participants.

This research is qualitative and based on a single case study. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct quantitative studies to statistically measure the impact of independence programs on reducing recidivism rates. In addition, comparative studies that examine the effectiveness of modern programs (such as barista training) versus traditional programs (such as welding or woodworking) could offer valuable insights for the development of more impactful rehabilitation initiatives.

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