

## LONELINESS IN ELDERLY INMATES AT CLASS IIA CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION BANJARMASIN

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**Article history:** received 09 November 2024; revised 12 November 2024; accepted 24 December 2024 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33751/jhss.v8i1.11285>

**Abstract.** This study explores the condition of loneliness among elderly prisoners at Class IIA Banjarmasin Correctional Facility. A qualitative approach with a descriptive narrative design was used to understand the subjective experiences of elderly prisoners. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and observations of elderly prisoners, assisting inmates and Kasubi Bimkemaswat of Class IIA Banjarmasin Correctional Facility, using purposive sampling. Data analysis was conducted in three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, with validity tested using data source triangulation. The results show that emotional loneliness among elderly prisoners is caused and can be analyzed by aspects such as the loss of intimate relationships, lack of attachment figures, feelings of emptiness, and abandonment. Social loneliness arises from superficial friendships, boredom, environmental changes, and rejection. Proposed intervention programs include religious approaches and group discussions between elderly prisoners, psychologists, and religious figures, aimed at reducing feelings of loneliness by enhancing emotional and social support.

**Keywords:** emotional loneliness; social loneliness; elderly prisoners

### I. INTRODUCTION

Inmates, who are often called assisted citizens, are individuals involved in criminal acts and must serve their sentences in correctional institutions (prisons) in accordance with the verdict given by the court. Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 22 of 2022 Article 1 Paragraph 6 defines an inmate as a convict who is serving a prison sentence for a certain period of time, for life, or a death row inmate awaiting execution. In the process, they run a coaching program in prisons (Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022).

Furthermore, Article 1 Paragraph 18 of the Law states that prisons are institutions that carry out coaching functions for inmates. Although its main function is coaching, prisons in Indonesia often face major problems, one of which is overcrowding, or overcapacity of inmates, both inmates and prisoners. This overcrowding condition can create a critical situation that has a major impact on various aspects of inmates' lives in prisons (Rado & Badilla, 2021).

The latest data from the Directorate General of Corrections shows that as of January 16, 2024, prisons and State Prisons (Rutan) in Indonesia, which have a total capacity of 128,656 people, are inhabited by 181,886 inmates and 46,318 prisoners. This means that there is an excess capacity of 77%, which has an impact on the emergence of various problems in prisons, such as an increase in suicide rates, low discipline, and psychological and physiological health problems (Hamja, 2022). Prisoners' mental health is also affected by overcrowding, which can lead to feelings of distress, stress, and decreased adaptability (Murtisari et al., 2022).

This condition has a great impact on elderly prisoners, who according to Presidential Regulation Number 88 of 2021 are those aged 60 years and above. The elderly, due to the aging process, experience a decline in physical and psychological functioning, which causes them to require special attention and care. The elderly in prisons often face limited space, access to health services, and special care needed, which further worsens their physical and mental conditions (Nugroho, 2020).

Although the government has established a special policy for elderly inmates through the Regulation of the Minister of Law and Human Rights Number 32 of 2018, its implementation in many prisons is still not optimal. For example, the Class IIB Prison in Tabanan, Bali, which is experiencing overcrowding, makes elderly inmates have to be crowded into cramped rooms without special facilities, even though their health conditions have often deteriorated (Subardhini, 2021).

The elderly who are in prisons are also at risk of experiencing various psychological problems, one of which is loneliness or loneliness. Loneliness is often caused by the diminishing or loss of supportive social networks, both in quantity and quality, resulting in a feeling of not having a meaningful attachment to the surrounding environment (Hermawati & Hidayat, 2019). Loneliness in the elderly in prisons, coupled with limited mobility, health problems, and social isolation, can worsen their physical and mental health, as well as increase the risk of victimization in prison settings (Lorito et al., 2019).

Data from the Banjarmasin Class IIA Prison Primary Clinic shows that until January 2024, there are 6 elderly inmates who have health problems, such as non-hemorrhagic post-stroke, pharyngitis, dermatitis, whooping cough, and acute respiratory tract infections (ISPA). In addition, based on the Banjarmasin Class IIA Prison Correctional Database System as of January 17, 2024, the total number of prison inmates reached 2,175 people, far exceeding the normal capacity of 366 people. Of these, 31 people are elderly inmates, with the majority involved in narcotics cases (24 people).

The most common psychological problem experienced by elderly inmates is loneliness. This loneliness can be exacerbated by high stressors as well as distressing life experiences during their criminal years. Prolonged feelings of loneliness can adversely affect mental and physical health, and can even lead to serious disorders such as Alzheimer's, cardiovascular disorders, hypertension, obesity, and depression (Schliehe et al., 2022). Thus, it is important to pay special attention to the mental health of elderly inmates so that they can better serve their sentences.

Based on this background, this study aims to explore the condition of loneliness in elderly inmates in Class IIA Prison Banjarmasin and find solutions in the form of programs or interventions that can be applied to overcome these problems

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research method uses a qualitative approach, which aims to understand the meaning of social experience, in this case related to loneliness in elderly inmates in correctional institutions. This qualitative research is applied with a descriptive research design that focuses on narrative research. Narrative research examines the lives of individuals by collecting stories from related subjects, which are then retold by researchers in the form of chronological narratives (Riessman, 2008). In this study, elderly inmates were asked to share their experiences and views related to loneliness, which was then described by the researcher based on their perspective. The main source of data for this study was obtained through in-depth interviews with elderly inmates and auxiliary inmates (tamping), as well as observations conducted to see firsthand their activities and emotional expressions. This observation aims to obtain additional information about the general impressions, social interactions, and emotional reactions of elderly inmates in the prison environment.

Primary data collection was carried out through a purposive sampling technique, where researchers selected elderly inmates with certain cases, namely inmates with child abuse cases who were more prone to experiencing loneliness than inmates with other cases such as narcotics. In addition, data collection is also carried out by building a good rapport with informants, thus creating a comfortable and conducive atmosphere during the interview process. Secondary data are taken from various literature, laws, and articles relevant to this study. After the data is collected, the analysis process is

carried out through three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The validity of the data is tested by triangulation of different data sources, while reliability is maintained through transcription checks and confirmation of definitions of terms and codes used.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Emotional Loneliness in Elderly Prisoners*

Weiss (1973) argues that emotional loneliness can arise as a result of the loss of intimate relationships, such as a partner, close friend, or other form of emotional bonding. This is emphasized by Gierveld et al. (2006), who stated that a person's low level of attachment can increase the risk of emotional loneliness. In the context of elderly inmates in the Banjarmasin Class IIA Correctional Institution, the loss of intimate relationships can be caused by circumstances that hinder or the loss of emotional relationships that they have experienced before becoming inmates. The three informants in the study, ZK, HR, and SM, described that they felt no longer cared for by their family or close relatives, who considered them no longer useful or valuable due to their advanced age and physical limitations. There are four important aspects that make up emotional loneliness: loss of intimate relationships, absence of attachment, emptiness, and abandonment.

The first aspect, namely the loss of intimate relationships, was experienced by the three informants while serving their sentences. ZK informant, rarely visited by his family, especially by his children and wife. ZK was last visited in 2019, and before that he also lost his eldest son to illness. This loss was a big blow to ZK, but he tried to give up because he considered it God's destiny. This was described by ZK in an interview, where he said that the feeling of neglect was getting stronger as he was rarely visited by his family. HR informants, on the other hand, have never once been visited by their children or wives while in prison. He felt that his family was busy with their own affairs and no longer paid attention to him. HR describes his feelings with resignation, accepting the fact that he does not receive the same attention as he used to. Meanwhile, SM's informant had been divorced twice, and after becoming an inmate, he was also never again visited by his children or ex-wife. According to him, the relationship has really been severed, both emotionally and communicatively.

The second aspect, namely the absence of attachment figures, focuses on the absence of people who can be relied on or have a special closeness that is very meaningful to the lives of elderly prisoners. The loss of attachment is often caused by death or separation resulting from a prison criminal situation. The presence of an attachment figure is important for inmates, especially the elderly, because they need emotional support during their incarceration. ZK said that friends from Alalak do exist, but the relationship with them is only limited to makeshift assistance and nothing more. According to him, children and wife are the most meaningful figures in his life, but the fact that they rarely visit him makes him feel that he has lost a strong emotional bond with them.

HR also stated similarly, that he did not feel any close connection with his fellow inmates, and that the only person who meant anything to him was his son, even though he had never been visited. HR felt resigned and only hoped that one day his son could come to visit him. Meanwhile, SM considers his first child to be the closest person to him, although he is also rarely visited. SM often feels longing for his son and hopes to improve their relationship someday.

The third aspect of emotional loneliness is emptiness, which refers to feelings of emptiness or lack of affection that should be obtained from family or close people. This emptiness is exacerbated by the condition of elderly people in prison, which often triggers the appearance of these feelings. ZK admitted that he often felt empty in his life, even though he had a roommate. She realized that the presence of friends in prison could not replace the warmth of relationships with family. ZK also feels regretful and helpless over the time he spent in prison, which he said had wasted a lot of valuable time in his life. HR also experienced a feeling of emptiness that made him only able to remain silent and resigned to the situation. He interprets his life by accepting whatever happens and living everything sincerely. SM informants also feel emptiness, especially when they see other inmates often visited by their families. A feeling of envy arose in him, and he realized that this experience of living in prison would be a valuable lesson for him in the future.

The last aspect, abandonment or feeling of neglect, describes how elderly inmates feel neglected and do not get the attention they need. ZK often feels this feeling of neglect, especially at night before going to bed, where he often thinks about his children and wife who rarely visit him. This feeling is even stronger when the holidays arrive, when she longs for moments of togetherness with her family. Even so, ZK said that the attention from prison officers is sometimes there, especially related to security and order, even though it is not personal. HR also feels neglected by his children and wife. He said that if his son came, he would be grateful, but if not, he could only resign and accept his situation. Meanwhile, SM felt the same way, where he never received attention from his children, wife, or siblings. This situation made SM feel even more isolated and neglected during his criminal term.

#### *Social Loneliness in Elderly Prisoners*

Social loneliness, as described by Weiss (1973), occurs when a person does not have adequate social relationships with friends, colleagues, or neighbors in the surrounding environment. In this context, social loneliness refers more to social relationships related to acceptance from other individuals. The first aspect in this dimension is friendship. ZK, one of the informants, revealed that he had many friends in prison, but the relationship was not very close. According to ZK, each inmate has their own interests, making it difficult to build close relationships. HR also stated that his relationship with friends was only limited to friends talking and not too close. He feels it is important to maintain good relations by doing good to each other without triggering conflict. SM also stated that he has many friends, but the quality of the relationship is mediocre. Initially, SM felt scared and traumatized when he first entered the prison, but

as time went by, he managed to adapt to the social environment in the prison.

The second aspect of social loneliness is boredom, which is often caused by a lack of meaningful activities while serving a sentence in prison. ZK stated that his daily activities are to help with the security and order department of the prison, but he has no hobbies and prefers to sleep after work. To overcome boredom, ZK gets closer to Allah SWT through *istighfar*, prayer, and fasting. HR has more limited activities, such as prayer, talking with friends, and gymnastics, but most of his time is spent sleeping. Similar to ZK, HR has no hobbies and faces boredom with resignation. SM fills his time with worship, such as prayer and recitation, as well as a hobby of reading books. For SM, worship is a way to calm the mind and overcome boredom.

The third aspect of social loneliness is a change in residence or environment, which can be a major challenge for elderly inmates to adapt. ZK feels that the hardest thing to accept is to lose a broader purpose in life. According to him, outside the prison he can plan for the future and have colleagues to share his thoughts, but he does not find this in the prison. For HR, the biggest difficulty is the lack of a job that can be used as a handle for the future, although he feels that adjusting to the prison environment is a normal thing. SM felt that the differences in the characters of other inmates were the biggest challenge in adapting, but as time went by, he was able to adjust and face all challenges with patience.

The last aspect is rejection, which is related to how elderly inmates are accepted in the prison environment. ZK revealed that he was often ridiculed by younger inmates, but he did not feel excessive rejection. According to him, other inmates will only provide assistance when they are sick or helpless. HR does not feel ridicule or any form of rejection and tends to be indifferent to things that do not affect him too much. On the contrary, SM often feels ostracized and ridiculed because of his old age. He also felt avoided by other inmates, even though they were still willing to help him when he needed help.

#### *Loneliness Experiences*

Previously, interviews were conducted with informants to explore their experiences related to loneliness, both in the dimensions of emotional loneliness and social loneliness. Informant ZK admitted that he often felt lonely, especially because he was separated from his family. ZK stated that when he first entered the prison, he felt alone without the support of his family and could not fully trust other inmates. This made him rely more on himself and take advice from prison officers as a guide in living his days. Although ZK had interactions with other inmates, he felt that the relationship was not enough to replace the closeness and security he usually got from his family. The limited trust in others in the prison also affects ZK's ability to establish deeper social relationships, thus adding to the sense of isolation he experienced.

The same thing is also experienced by HR and SM informants, who feel lonely due to losing relationships with family. HR felt a deep loneliness because he had never been visited by his children and wife during his criminal term. He

feels neglected and no longer cared for as a parent, which causes a strong sense of loneliness. SM also revealed that even though he has friends in the prison, interaction with fellow inmates still cannot replace the relationship with family. The loneliness is especially felt when she is about to sleep, where the thought of not visiting her children and family often triggers negative feelings. Despite having friends, SM felt that family relationships had a deeper meaning, so their absence led to a stronger sense of loneliness.

#### *Proposed Intervention in Dealing with Loneliness of Elderly Prisoners at Class IIA Counseling Institution Banjarmasin*

Elderly inmates have different needs and require care from other general inmates due to the impact of vulnerability and decreased physical function experienced. Special monitoring and more attention to elderly inmates are needed. As stated by Mr. Junaidi as the Head of the Sub-Section of Community Guidance and Care of the Class IIA Correctional Institution Banjarmasin, namely the Prison must be more active in approaching and paying attention to elderly inmates to know what is needed or the treatment needed for them in terms of physical, mental, and other things that can support their life as an elderly person in the prison and if further handling is needed, the prison will collaborate with doctors, psychologists, or other professional parties to handle complaints and problems from elderly inmates.

The coaching program that has been running at the Banjarmasin Class IIA Correctional Institution for elderly inmates based on Mr. Junaidi's statement is a religious approach program, such as lectures, programs to memorize the Qur'an, and other programs related to getting closer to God, as well as special gymnastics for the elderly. Furthermore, in addition to the programs that have been mentioned, intervention programs that can be applied to specifically address the problem of loneliness or mental and psychological problems faced by elderly inmates are such as group discussion programs between fellow elderly inmates accompanied by religious leaders and psychologists to jointly discuss any problems or complaints faced and exchange ideas to find a way out of this problem.

It is hoped that the existence of a forum for elderly inmates to overflow and pour out their hearts that they have been carrying the burden themselves, can make them feel warmth and feel that they are not facing this situation themselves and get solutions, suggestions, and guidance for these problems. Thus, elderly inmates can avoid feelings of loneliness, both emotionally and socially.

The experience of loneliness experienced by elderly inmates in the Banjarmasin Class IIA Correctional Institution, which includes emotional and social loneliness due to limited interaction and loss of family relationships. To address this problem, a program called "Group Discussions between Elderly Inmates with Psychologists and Religious Leaders" was proposed which aims to reduce loneliness by building deeper social interactions and providing emotional and spiritual support. The program involves group discussions guided by psychologists and religious leaders, with the aim of improving mental health, building solidarity, and strengthening the spirituality of elderly inmates. This

discussion is also expected to identify and solve the problem of loneliness through the right psychological and spiritual approach.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The loneliness that occurs in elderly inmates in the Class IIA Banjarmasin Correctional Institution can be reviewed from emotional and social loneliness, where emotional loneliness in elderly inmates can be analyzed from aspects such as loss of intimate relationships, absence of attachment, emptiness, and feelings of neglect. Informants feel isolated due to lack of family visits, reduced close relationships, and inability to replace the emotional support they are missing. On the other hand, social loneliness in elderly inmates can be analyzed from the aspects of superficial friendships, boredom, environmental changes, and rejection. Intervention programs such as religious approaches and group discussions are expected to reduce feelings of loneliness by providing better emotional and social support.

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