

The Effect of Pandemic on Loneliness in the New Normal Life

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ABSTRACT

Prisoners are a part of society in the new-normal life. The rules in the new normal are changing all the time, including in prisons. One of the regulations during the new-normal life is their family could not visit prisoners. According to Plt. Dirjen Pas Decision Number: PAS-08.OT.02.02. 2020, this is related to the prevention of the Covid-19 spread in prisons. This can be a problem for the mental health of prisoners. Prisoners can feel lonely. Loneliness is a condition when a person feels alone, unloved, and feels unimportant. These conditions produce "Loneliness." Prisoners with high loneliness reported higher levels of depression, hopelessness, and suicidal tendencies. Through the literature review, this article tries to discuss how loneliness is in the prisoners in the new-normal life, observed from many aspects. The results of this article are a description of the prisoner's loneliness viewed from many aspects such as age, marriage, and relationship with children, and length of prison term in the new-normal life.

Keywords: *Prisoners 1, loneliness 2, new-normal life 3.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Prisoners are part of society in the new normal era. There are many policies implemented around the world to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic virus, including policies for prisoners in prisons. In Indonesia, the policy refers to Plt. Dirjen Pas Decision Number: PAS-08.OT.02.02. 2020 related to the prevention of the Covid-19 spread in prisons. With this, the assisted residents do not have the right to be visited, including by their families. Thus, prisoners do not get visits, including from their families.

The ban is still in effect today. When prisoners do not have the right to be visited, they will feel alone and lonely; in psychology, this explains that they are prisoners who feel high loneliness, have a high level of depression, feeling hopeless. It can be an indicator of suicide,

phenomenon is called loneliness. According to Rokach, pp. 59 [1], loneliness is a condition in which a person feels alone, unloved, feels unimportant, feels unnoticed, resulting in loneliness. Loneliness can happen to anyone who feels a sense of being alone and not being cared for, especially for prisoners in prison. Especially for prisoners, the Covid-19 pandemic in this new normal life is hard. They must complete their own prison term and cannot be visited by other people and even their families.

Prisoners in prison feel high stress, anxiety, and depression; this is in line with research Chooper and Berwick, pp. 169 [2]. The other research from Brown and Day, pp. 433 [3] the feeling of loneliness. If the condition continues and is complicated by the rule that families cannot visit them, they will feel the negative impact of

loneliness on physical, psychological, and psychosocial functions Cacioppo, Cacioppo, Capitanio and Cole pp. 11 [4]

In addition, according to Rokach, pp. 60 and Swan, 2018 [1], loneliness is seen as a social epidemic, which has several impacts such as decreased physical function, decreased immunity, obesity, increased blood pressure, stroke, and even death. Besides, it also involves the psychological impact felt by prisoners such as anxiety, depression, suicide, dementia, and decline cognitive function can happen in prisoners. If social distancing continues in prison, prisoners will feel the negative impact of loneliness. Although there have been many studies on loneliness, literature studies or literature review on the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on loneliness in the new normal life is still few. So the researchers are interested in seeing how the symptoms of loneliness affect loneliness in the new normal life during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this research is legal science; it is referred to as a normative juridical approach. The legal research approach is carried out by examining literature review or secondary data as the basis of research by looking for regulations and literature related to the problems examined Istiqomah, pp. 101 [5].

Researchers looked at many scientific sources, such as journals and books, to see how the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on loneliness in prisoners in the new normal life in prisons, with the policies that the family should not visit them, preventing transmission of Covid-19 pandemic in prisons.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Prisoners are a vulnerable group affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. There have been many studies on the impact of the pandemic on society, but in the previous research, little focus has been given to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on prisoners, even though prisoners have the potential to be affected by Covid-19, both in terms of physical and mental health. Policies made by the government, too, can have an impact on many prisoners' life.

3.1 Prevention of Covid-19 in Prisons

There are many ways in which every state authority can prevent the Covid-19 virus in prison for prisons. For example, first, in Australia, the COVID-19, by introducing a mix of restrictive practices, including suspension of social visits, restriction of non-essential inmate movement between centers, the introduction of temperature testing for staff, suspension of work release, the introduction of quarantine periods for new inmates, creation of isolation hubs and field hospitals within existing centers to isolate positive inmates, and trials of family video visitation Stewart, et al.,[6]. The second is the Italian government's progressive isolation from the external world and adoption of practices to identify possible causes and to treat infected subjects. Cingolani, at.all, pp. 1 [7].

Corrections officials across the country have responded by shifting institutional practices, including suspending visitation and programming, as well as releasing some prisoners early Pratt, et al., pp.1[8]. The United Nations Office conducted another study on Drugs and Crime in 2020, which recommends making restrictions on fellow prisoners meeting each other for 22 hours. In Indonesia, the rules during the new-normal life are

prisoners could not be visited by their family, according to Plt. Dirjen Pas Decision Number: PAS-08.OT.02.02. 2020, related to the prevention of the Covid-19 spread in prisons. The overwhelming majority of these countries imposed general restrictions on their prisoners.

3.2 The Effect of Pandemic on Loneliness

The efforts to prevent the spread of Covid-19 sure can prevent the spread of the virus, but in terms of mental health, these efforts to curb the spread of Covid-19, which the authorities have carried out for a long time, can interfere with the mental health of prisoners during the new normal period in prison Hotopf, et. al, 2020; 568 [9].

Research by Kilgore et al., Sharira, et al., [10] Covid-19 pandemic increases loneliness in society. This loneliness is a social pandemic in itself. Uncertainty, anxiety caused by the unpredictability of the COVID-19 pandemic makes prisoners vulnerable to the impact of the covid-19 pandemic. Of course, people whom judicial processes have sentenced feel that they are different, and this feeling can lead to loneliness.

Loneliness is the incompatibility between the level of social interaction and the actual desire to interact (Durak, pp. 988) [11]. Furthermore, loneliness is defined as a strong desire from someone to be with other people and is an innate trait that humans have Romano, pp. 1092[12]. In addition, according to Rokach, pp. 59 [1], loneliness is a condition in which a person feels alone, unloved, feels unimportant, feels unnoticed so that the result feels a "Lonely" experience. So we can be defined as loneliness in prisoners is the desire to be with other people, so that it makes

prisoners feel alone, unloved, feel unimportant, feel unattended.

During the period of detention, facing the threat of Covid-19, a period where a defendant is very vulnerable and often contemplates the outcome of their trial and feeling the pressure, uncertainty, and anxiety about their future; these emotions can be amplified by the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic Hotpaf, et al., pp. 570 [9]. Prisoners feel a high level of loneliness, depression, and hopelessness; all these can be an indicator of suicide, in a study by Brown dan Day pp. 433[3]

Another study by Child and Lawton [13] states that young adults perceive loneliness twice as much as older adults, even though they have larger personal networks, have more social participation. Young adults who have a lot of physical and social activities while in prison will leave their personal networks so that feelings of loneliness can come up in these situations, contrary to the results of previous research Smith, pp. 293 and Paredes et al., pp. 1 [14] [15] that stated that older people are at higher risk of feeling lonely. The loneliness in older people occurs due to increasing age, separation, which decreases their physical function, health, and well-being. In other words, while in prison, both young and old people can feel lonely, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Other factors that influence loneliness are marriage situations. Intimacy is obtained when there is a close relationship between two people who reveal themselves to each other, gaining warmth, affection, and interdependence between partners. Intimacy obtained between two men is a shallow relationship, thus making them lonely Bavinn, pp. 49-52 .

Prisoners in prison, being far away from their life partners, lose their intimacy in the relationship. This loss is greater in the case of divorce. After a divorce, the quality of intimate relationships will be lost, but not only is it lost, it also loses social relations so that it can cause a person to feel lonely Högnäs in Mortelmans, pp. 149[16]. Therefore, divorced prisoners who are undergoing their loss of relationship period, not only the intimate ones but also social relationships with spouses as well as family, friends, and even parents, can feel loneliness. This is in line with Mortelmans, pp. 151 [16] that people with more social contacts have a greater risk for loneliness.

Before the Covid-19, the level of loneliness in prison was at a moderate level. This perceived loneliness in prisoners can come up due to the lack of support from family or friends, lack of interaction in prisons, and feeling uncomfortable. With the Covid-19 pandemic, the risk factors for loneliness in prisoners are getting worse with the social restrictions in prison, where prisoners cannot be visited by their families and spend more time alone in their cells. A survey study by Aisyah, et al., pp. 204[17], conducted research on the level of loneliness among citizens of a medium to a high level with a presentation of 85.6%. This research can prove that during the Covid-19 epidemic, a high level of loneliness happens in almost all prisoners.

If loneliness in prisons continues, prisoners may feel the negative impact on their physical, mental, and psychosocial functions Cacioppo, Cacioppo, Capitanio dan Cole pp. 11 [4]. Besides that, loneliness is seen as a social epidemic Rokach, pp. 60 and Swan, pp. 1, [1] which has several effects such as decreased physical function, decreased immunity, obesity, increased blood pressure, stress,

and even death. Psychologically, it can have an impact on anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts. In addition, it can create dementia and decreased cognitive function. If the condition of loneliness continues in prisoners, the negative impact of loneliness may be harshly felt.

Family visits to prisoners can help them get social support, cope with mental stress, and reduce the risk of suicide. The new regulation made by the authorities to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in prison make the conditions worse. Because of them, the other methods have to be thought of by the authorities.

The prisoners need to show interest and express their feelings and experiences to not experience loneliness. It is also an explanation that the authorities should consider other methods of communication, such as writing letters, increasing access to landlines, and using prison voicemail services. So that emotional support from other prisoners is also maintained, for example, by providing telephone access Smet, et al., pp. 1571[18].

The other studies explain that another thing that can make the conditions worse is time spent in cells up to 23 hours per day, without any replacement of activity, and work has been stopped without any substitute activities so that there is no interaction between prisoners. Because of that, the authorities must begin to evaluate the strategy so that the mental health of the prisoners is maintained. The strategies that can be done are to improve the mental health of prisoners; activities carried out such as exercises in cells, health applications, and psychological therapy by telephone Hotope, et al., pp. 568[9].

4. CONCLUSION

There are many ways in which every state authority can prevent the Covid-19 virus in prison for prisoners as a group vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic. There have been many studies on the impact of pandemics on society; however, there are still few studies on the pandemic effects of prisoners, even though prisoners have the potential to be exposed to Covid-19 both in terms of health and mental health.

In Indonesia, the rules during the new-normal life are that prisoners could not be visited by their family, according to Plt. Dirjen Pas Decision Number: PAS-08.OT.02.02. 2020 related to the prevention of the Covid-19 spread in prisons. This rule will not only have an impact on efforts to spread the Covid-19 pandemic in prisons but can also have an impact on the mental health of prisoners. Prisoners who have just been incarcerated feel new experiences such as being far from their family, entering a foreign environment. So that inmates feel loneliness, stress, anxiety, and a high level of depression.

This condition becomes worse with the Covid-19 pandemic, where their families can not visit them. A study stated that during the Covid-19, the level of loneliness in prisoners was at a moderate to a high level with a percentage of 85.6%. If this condition continues, they may feel the negative impact of loneliness on physical function, mental health, and psychosocial.

The authorities must begin to evaluate the strategy so that the mental health of the prisoners is maintained. The strategies that can be done are to improve the mental health of prisoners; activities carried out such as exercises in cells, health applications, and psychological therapy by telephone. In addition, the authorities should

consider other methods of communication, such as writing letters, increasing access to landlines, and using prison voicemail services. So that emotional support from other prisoners is also maintained, for example, by providing telephone access.

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