

FROM INCARCERATION TO EMPOWERMENT: THE ROLE OF SFBC IN ENHANCING SELF-ESTEEM AND EDUCATIONAL REHABILITATION OF DRUG OFFENDERS

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ABSTRACT

Correctional assisted citizens, particularly those involved in drug-related offenses, often suffer from low self-esteem due to intersecting factors such as broken family backgrounds, social stigma, addiction, and incarceration. These psychological vulnerabilities frequently hinder their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. The aim of this study was to explore the effectiveness of Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) in enhancing the self-esteem of inmates, specifically through a case study of an individual (Mas Firman) incarcerated in Banyuwangi Prison. Using a qualitative case study approach supported by literature review, the study applied the five-stage SFBC framework—relationship building, problem identification, goal setting, intervention, and evaluation—and gathered data through interviews, observations, and documentation triangulation. The results showed that SFBC contributed significantly to the subject's behavioral and emotional transformation. Initially exhibiting signs of introversion, distress, and hopelessness, the subject demonstrated increased self-confidence, religious engagement, goal-oriented behavior, and social interaction following the counseling sessions. These findings indicate that self-esteem is a malleable psychological construct that can be improved through structured, culturally sensitive, and strength-based interventions. The subject's transformation was driven not only by counseling techniques but also by the integration of spiritual and familial dimensions into the therapeutic process. This study makes several contributions to the literature. Theoretically, it contextualizes SFBC within a correctional setting, enriching its application in non-traditional domains. Methodologically, it provides a comprehensive qualitative model for narrative-based inmate rehabilitation research. Practically, it presents SFBC as an adaptable tool for correctional counselors and educators to support psychological restoration. Furthermore, this study highlights the broader educational utility of SFBC in character development, life skills training, and mental health interventions, especially within inclusive and culturally grounded educational environments. The findings suggest that SFBC can be effectively integrated into correctional counseling systems and educational programs, particularly in settings that prioritize individual strengths, cultural identity, and spiritual values. Future research is encouraged to explore SFBC's application using comparative case studies or mixed-method designs, and to examine the long-term sustainability of its psychological impacts across diverse institutional contexts.

Keywords: cultural identity; narrative case study; psychological resilience; self-esteem; solution-focused brief counseling

INTRODUCTION

Correctional Assisted Citizens—including inmates, correctional students, and correctional clients—are a vulnerable population segment often entangled in life-altering circumstances such as familial disintegration, substance addiction, socio-economic marginalization, and systemic neglect. These individuals frequently suffer from deteriorating psychological resilience, which is manifested in pervasive low self-esteem. As exemplified by the case of Mas Firman, a drug offender serving a sentence in Banyuwangi Prison, the pathway to incarceration is frequently intertwined with adverse childhood experiences, inadequate parental supervision, and destructive peer environments. The psychological

consequence of such a trajectory is a deep-rooted negative self-concept, often reinforced by the stigmatizing atmosphere of correctional institutions. Prior research underscores this concern: Juniarta et al. (2015) identified a significant association between high stress levels and low self-esteem among female inmates, whereas Bandi and Soetjningsih (2020) emphasized that individuals with higher self-esteem exhibit greater adaptability, independence, and emotional regulation, contributing to more successful rehabilitation outcomes.

The central challenge confronted by correctional institutions is the inadequacy of conventional rehabilitation strategies to address the psychosocial needs of inmates—particularly in fostering self-worth and psychological agency. Low self-esteem in incarcerated populations is not merely a psychological trait but a barrier to behavioral change, reintegration, and relapse prevention. Traditional correctional programs often focus disproportionately on punitive or procedural elements, failing to provide inmates with transformative tools for self-discovery and empowerment. Therefore, a shift towards person-centered, solution-oriented, and strengths-based interventions is imperative. An effective general solution lies in integrating counseling modalities that prioritize clients' narratives, affirm personal capabilities, and cultivate future-focused goal-setting within correctional rehabilitation frameworks.

Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) emerges as a compelling intervention framework to address the psychosocial rehabilitation of inmates. Characterized by its brevity, clarity, and collaborative orientation, SFBC reframes counseling from deficit-focused to resource-oriented. As proposed by Kim (2014), SFBC facilitates the exploration of possible futures rather than dissecting past failures, empowering clients to articulate desired outcomes through incremental and attainable steps. The method capitalizes on individual agency, encouraging the use of scaling questions, exception-finding, miracle questions, and goal formulation to spark hope and mobilize internal resources. Widayanti (2020) emphasizes that SFBC is especially relevant in contexts where time-limited, practical, and motivational counseling is needed. Moreover, its adaptability to diverse client backgrounds makes it an ideal model for correctional populations (Rostini & Nurjannah, 2021). Despite its versatility, SFBC's core principles—such as the belief in the client's inherent strengths, the therapeutic alliance, and solution construction—remain consistent across contexts, rendering it a promising approach to elevate self-esteem among incarcerated individuals.

Although the literature demonstrates SFBC's success in settings like schools, families, and general mental health care (Kim, 2020), its application within correctional environments—especially targeting drug convicts from broken homes—remains underexamined. Hasan (2017) conducted an SFBC study within Class IIA prisons but did not focus on self-esteem enhancement. Similarly, Syahrul (2019) explored psychological well-being among inmates but lacked an in-depth examination of the role of SFBC in rebuilding damaged self-concepts. Research by Putra (2020) and Nugraha (2022) suggested potential benefits of SFBC in improving inmates' self-acceptance, yet did not specifically investigate its structured application across the five SFBC stages in restoring self-esteem. Additionally, few studies incorporate qualitative, case-based designs that allow for rich narrative analysis of inmates' lived experiences in the context of SFBC. This presents a clear research gap—both in content (specific focus on self-esteem) and in method (use of in-depth, narrative case study)—which this study intends to fill.

The primary objective of this study is to explore the implementation of Solution-Focused Brief Counseling in enhancing the self-esteem of assisted residents involved in drug-related offenses, using a case study design. The study asserts its novelty through a dual-layered contribution: (1) the contextual adaptation of SFBC to prison-based rehabilitation, and (2) the qualitative exploration of inmates' self-narratives within the SFBC framework, particularly highlighting the five key stages—relationship building, problem identification, goal setting, intervention, and evaluation. The hypothesis underlying this study is that structured SFBC intervention fosters increased self-esteem among inmates by reconstructing their personal narratives, redefining their identities, and cultivating goal-directed behavior. The scope is focused on one inmate at Banyuwangi Prison (Mas Firman), whose life history and counseling journey serve as a

microcosm for broader challenges faced by similarly situated individuals. Employing triangulated data from observations, interviews, and documentation, this study offers a comprehensive understanding of how SFBC can catalyze psychological recovery and social reintegration in correctional settings

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study approach complemented by a literature review strategy to explore the effectiveness of Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) in improving self-esteem among correctional assisted residents convicted in drug-related cases. The rationale for adopting a case study lies in its ability to provide an in-depth and holistic understanding of a single phenomenon within its real-life context. As noted by Wahyuningsih (2019), a case study enables researchers to examine a specific case intensively, focusing on the dynamics present within single settings, institutions, or social groups by using multiple data collection methods. In this research, the subject under investigation is “Mas Firman,” a male inmate at Banyuwangi Prison with a history of narcotics abuse and psychological distress rooted in his socio-familial background.

Case Study Design and Rationale

The case study design was selected due to its relevance in examining psychological interventions and behavioral changes in naturalistic settings. This approach is particularly suitable for understanding individual counseling experiences and the nuanced development of self-esteem over time. A single case with embedded units of analysis was employed, focusing on different stages of the SFBC process as experienced by the participant—namely the relationship building stage, problem identification, goal setting, intervention design, and follow-up evaluation. These stages are not only analyzed in isolation but also in terms of their interdependence in producing transformative change.

Literature Review Component

In addition to the case study, a systematic literature review was conducted to enrich the theoretical foundation and highlight the empirical gap this study seeks to address. The review focused on journal articles published between 2015 and 2023 related to SFBC applications in correctional settings, self-esteem development, and counseling for substance users. The literature search was carried out using databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and DOAJ, employing keywords like “SFBC in prison,” “self-esteem in inmates,” “solution-focused therapy,” and “brief counseling for drug offenders.” The purpose of the literature review was to synthesize existing knowledge, identify patterns and inconsistencies in previous studies, and locate the niche that this study intends to fill. This step is crucial to establish the scientific relevance and originality of the research.

Data Sources

This study used both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data were obtained directly from the field through interactions with the subject (Mas Firman), including interviews, observations, and documentation. These were collected over a defined period during the subject’s incarceration and participation in the counseling process. The secondary data consisted of relevant documents, institutional records, journal articles, and existing literature on SFBC, correctional rehabilitation, and inmate psychology, serving as supporting evidence and context for the case study findings.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection in this study was carried out using three main techniques to ensure the richness and credibility of the findings. The first technique was in-depth interviews, conducted in a semi-structured format to allow the researcher to explore the subject’s personal history, psychological condition, and

experiences throughout the counseling sessions. These interviews utilized open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed, narrative responses and gain deeper insights from the participant's perspective. The second technique was participant observation, in which the researcher directly observed the subject during both formal counseling sessions and informal daily routines within the correctional facility. This method emphasized attention to both verbal and non-verbal communication, behavioral changes, and the subject's level of engagement with the intervention process. Observations were systematically recorded through field notes, which captured key events, emotional expressions, and patterns of interaction. The third technique involved documentation analysis, where various forms of written and institutional data were examined to support and validate the primary data. These included prison records, counseling session notes, reflective journals written by the subject, and institutional reports. This triangulated approach not only enriched the data but also increased the reliability and trustworthiness of the research outcomes by cross-verifying the information obtained through different sources and methods.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model (1994), which involves three concurrent flows of activity: (1) data reduction, where raw data are distilled into themes and categories; (2) data display, which organizes data in matrices and conceptual maps to visualize patterns; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification, where interpretations are made, tested, and refined through an iterative process. Triangulation was employed across sources and methods to ensure validity and reliability of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the institution overseeing the correctional program. The subject provided informed consent, and all data were anonymized to protect privacy. The study adhered to ethical principles of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and non-maleficence throughout the research process. In summary, this multifaceted methodological framework, combining a focused case study with a robust literature review, ensures that the findings are both contextually rich and theoretically grounded. It provides a nuanced understanding of how SFBC can be applied meaningfully to enhance self-esteem among assisted residents in correctional institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Increased Self-Esteem

The findings of this study underscore that self-esteem is a central determinant of behavior, motivation, and psychological adaptation, especially among incarcerated individuals. In the case of Mas Firman, a resident of Banyuwangi Prison, his low self-esteem was rooted in early familial instability, exposure to narcotics from adolescence, and abandonment by his spouse during incarceration. Initially introverted and withdrawn, Firman demonstrated signs of psychological distress such as pessimism, passivity, and diminished self-worth. However, following the structured intervention based on SFBC, Firman gradually exhibited behavioral transformation. He became more socially engaged, demonstrated reflective self-awareness, and began participating in spiritual activities—prayer, Qur'anic reading, and offering assistance to peers—indicating a strengthening self-concept and personal agency.

These results are congruent with the findings of Bandi and Soetjiningsih (2020), who emphasized that inmates with higher levels of self-esteem tend to be more expressive, proactive, and resilient in navigating correctional life. Firman's behavioral change post-counseling supports this assertion. Additionally, the findings align with Ghufroon and Risnawita S. (2012), who explained that unmet self-esteem needs contribute to dysfunctional behaviors, including aggression, passivity, or self-destructive patterns, particularly when individuals perceive themselves as unworthy or inferior. Mukhlis (2020) stressed the role of social experiences and the presence of positive reinforcement in shaping self-esteem. Firman's re-

engagement with social and religious life reflects this dynamic, suggesting that supportive interpersonal interactions and meaningful activities are essential in promoting psychological well-being. Furthermore, Klass and Hodge (2018) pointed out that self-esteem is formed and maintained through evaluations derived from others' feedback and one's own behavior. Firman's narrative showed that his initial feelings of worthlessness were reversed through consistent validation and self-reflection during counseling sessions. What distinguishes this study is the cultural embeddedness of the intervention. While much of the self-esteem literature is drawn from Western psychological frameworks, this research incorporates religious and familial dimensions that are central to Indonesian sociocultural identity. Thus, it extends the applicability of self-esteem theory into a localized, context-specific setting.

The implications of these findings are significant. They demonstrate that self-esteem, although vulnerable to deterioration due to incarceration and social rejection, can be reconstructed through targeted, strength-based interventions. The case of Firman highlights the need for correctional counselors to facilitate introspective growth, not merely behavioral compliance. Moreover, the spiritual practices embedded within the process served not only as coping mechanisms but also as mechanisms for self-affirmation and moral alignment, reinforcing the cultural relevance of religious frameworks in psychological rehabilitation (Zatrahadi et al., 2020). This study affirms the call for correctional reform that integrates psychosocial development within rehabilitation programs. Counselors must be equipped to identify and nurture the latent strengths of inmates, helping them to rebuild their self-worth and capacity for constructive future planning.

Self-Esteem Using Solution-Focused Brief Counseling

The use of Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) in this study facilitated a structured transformation in Firman's psychological outlook. Initially closed and disengaged, Firman progressed through SFBC's five essential stages—building rapport, identifying problems, formulating goals, implementing interventions, and conducting evaluations (Kim, 2014). He began setting specific goals such as attending religious classes, performing daily prayers, and maintaining communication with family. These behaviors indicated a move away from hopelessness toward a restructured sense of purpose. Firman's openness in later sessions, his willingness to assist others, and his ability to articulate realistic aspirations illustrated an increased capacity for self-direction and personal growth.

This case supports the findings of Widayanti (2020), who emphasized that SFBC enhances psychological empowerment by focusing on the individual's own resources rather than deficiencies. Likewise, the effectiveness of SFBC in time-limited settings, as noted by Rostini and Nurjannah (2021), was evident in the relatively short span over which Firman exhibited substantial psychological improvement. Kim (2020) also noted that SFBC's adaptability to different counseling settings—including families and schools—makes it suitable for diverse populations. This study extends that applicability to the correctional context in Indonesia. Furthermore, the structured nature of SFBC with its emphasis on client language, achievable goals, and therapeutic optimism reinforces the practicality and cultural sensitivity of this approach, especially when adapted to include religious practices as tools for resilience. The findings diverge slightly from de Shazer's (1985) original focus on solution-talk by incorporating spiritual practices as integral to the healing process, showing that SFBC, when contextualized, can evolve beyond its Western theoretical roots to meet the unique psychosocial needs of Southeast Asian inmates.

These findings reinforce SFBC's relevance as a humanistic, empowering framework for correctional counseling. The ability of clients like Firman to co-create goals using their own language—e.g., “I will read the Qur'an every morning” instead of abstract psychological jargon—ensured that the process remained client-centered and culturally grounded (Masril & Afiat, 2020). Moreover, the goal-setting techniques, such as miracle questions, scaling, and exception-seeking, allowed Firman to reframe his challenges as solvable and to visualize a more positive future (Nugraha, 2022). This reorientation is crucial for individuals who have long been trapped in cycles of shame, guilt, and hopelessness. The SFBC approach also mitigates

counselor dependency by positioning the client as the expert of their own life (Putra, 2020). This methodological stance is particularly empowering in prison settings, where individuals often experience a lack of control and autonomy. The rapid and tangible outcomes documented in this study support the broader use of SFBC in similar correctional institutions across Indonesia.

Implications in Education

The findings of this study have significant implications for the field of education, particularly in relation to counseling education, character education, and educational leadership within correctional and non-correctional learning environments. Firstly, this research highlights the transformative potential of Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) as an educational approach that fosters self-awareness, personal growth, and psychological resilience—elements essential to holistic education. Integrating SFBC principles into counseling curricula can equip future school counselors, guidance practitioners, and educational psychologists with practical strategies to support students facing emotional and behavioral challenges, particularly those from at-risk or marginalized backgrounds. Secondly, the study emphasizes the importance of shifting educational paradigms from punitive and deficit-based models toward strength-based and solution-oriented approaches. This shift aligns with global trends in inclusive education and supports the development of learner autonomy, motivation, and self-efficacy. By embedding SFBC principles into educational programs, institutions can promote a culture of positive behavioral support, where students are encouraged to set goals, recognize their strengths, and construct future-oriented plans—skills that are not only beneficial in correctional settings but also in mainstream and alternative education systems. Third, the success of SFBC in addressing emotional wounds, spiritual disconnection, and identity crises among inmates suggests the need to integrate spiritual and cultural values within educational interventions, particularly in regions like Indonesia where religion and family are integral to identity formation. This underscores the value of culturally responsive pedagogy, where educators and counselors are trained to acknowledge and utilize cultural narratives, spiritual practices, and community values in fostering student well-being and development. As demonstrated in this study, religious engagement played a key role in the subject's psychological healing, suggesting that educational counseling practices should not ignore these domains, especially in faith-based or value-oriented schools. Fourth, the study's implications extend to educational leadership and policy-making, particularly in vocational and life-skill training within correctional education programs. School leaders and policymakers should consider implementing SFBC-informed modules in correctional educational settings, focusing not only on academic knowledge but also on the socio-emotional development of learners. This approach aligns with 21st-century education frameworks that prioritize character building, mental health, and lifelong learning. Moreover, integrating SFBC into teacher professional development could enhance teacher-student communication, classroom climate, and conflict resolution capacities across various educational levels. Finally, this study encourages further research in educational contexts using SFBC, especially in areas such as bullying prevention, academic stress management, and adolescent identity development. It also supports longitudinal and comparative research designs to evaluate the long-term efficacy of SFBC in diverse school environments. Educational researchers and practitioners are thus called to explore how brief, future-focused, and student-centered approaches can enrich instructional models, enhance educational outcomes, and contribute to the creation of psychologically safe and empowering learning spaces.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the effectiveness of Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) as an intervention to improve the self-esteem of assisted residents involved in drug-related offenses, employing a qualitative case study design. The research focused on the counseling journey of an inmate at Banyuwangi Prison, seeking to understand how the structured framework of SFBC—which includes five critical stages:

relationship building, problem identification, goal setting, intervention, and evaluation—could foster psychological transformation, reconstruct personal narratives, and enhance self-worth within a correctional environment. Additionally, the study sought to address both a methodological and thematic gap in existing literature by concentrating specifically on self-esteem development in the context of cultural, religious, and familial influences through SFBC. The findings revealed that SFBC had a significant positive impact on the subject's self-esteem and overall psychological orientation. From an initial state of introversion and emotional instability—largely caused by abandonment, substance dependency, and incarceration—the subject began to demonstrate optimism, engage in religious practices, set meaningful personal goals, and express willingness to help others. These behavioral shifts indicated not only a renewed self-concept but also a greater sense of confidence in navigating life beyond prison. The study affirmed that self-esteem is a malleable construct, one that can be cultivated through future-focused, client-centered counseling. The integration of spiritual reflection, cultural identity, and personalized language within the SFBC sessions contributed to enhanced resilience, self-efficacy, and moral recovery. These results were consistent with existing studies, while also providing new insights into the contextual adaptability of SFBC within Southeast Asian correctional settings. This research contributes to the body of knowledge in several critical ways. Theoretically, it extends the application of SFBC beyond school and family environments into correctional rehabilitation, emphasizing its relevance in promoting self-esteem—a construct often neglected in conventional inmate counseling programs. It also demonstrates SFBC's adaptability in incorporating spiritual and cultural dimensions into the therapeutic process. Methodologically, this study utilizes a deeply narrative case study design, enriched by triangulated data (interviews, observation, and documentation), offering a robust model for future qualitative inquiries in similar contexts. Practically, the study underscores the need for client-centered, goal-directed counseling in prisons and advocates for the inclusion of SFBC in counselor training curricula. It also proposes a framework for implementing SFBC-based educational and rehabilitative models that promote psychological restoration and cultural relevance. In the realm of education, this research elevates SFBC as a strategic tool for fostering self-worth, life skills, and character development among at-risk learners, supporting its integration into counseling education, character education programs, and mental health support services in schools. This aligns with global shifts toward inclusive, holistic, and strength-based education systems.

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