



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Reconstructing Positive Self-Image among Juvenile Inmates through Positive Interactive Counselling: A Strength-Based Approach to Psychosocial Rehabilitation

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Abstract. This exploratory study examines how a brief Positive Interactive Counselling (PIC) session can foster positive self-image among justice-involved adolescents in an Indonesian juvenile correctional facility. Beyond a community outreach activity, the work is framed as qualitative descriptive research with a clear theoretical contribution to Positive Psychology and Psychosocial Rehabilitation. Three participants (ages 16–17), purposively sampled, completed a single 60-minute group session combining guided reflection and peer sharing. Data (fieldnotes, participant worksheets, and in-session reflections) were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. Three themes emerged: (1) a growing desire to make a positive impact coupled with personal responsibility; (2) recognition of self-potential linked to skills and long-term goals; and (3) spiritual strength as a stabilizing foundation in adversity. Empirically, the session elicited counter-stereotypic self-descriptions and visible peer affirmation; observed changes included increased self-confidence, self-awareness, and perceived readiness for social reintegration. Conceptually, findings illuminate how PIC may support self-reconstruction by aligning with autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs while normalizing hope and meaning-making in a culturally resonant setting. Practically, the study demonstrates a low-resource, replicable protocol suitable for constrained custodial contexts and points to directions for longitudinal and multi-site evaluation.

Keywords: Positive Interactive Counselling; Juvenile Inmates; Positive Self-Image; Psychosocial Support; Self-Determination Theory; Thematic Analysis; Social Stigma; Spiritual Coping.

ABSTRAK

Studi eksploratif ini menelaah bagaimana satu sesi singkat Positive Interactive Counselling (PIC) dapat membangun citra diri positif pada remaja binaan di sebuah lembaga pemasyarakatan anak di Indonesia. Melampaui kegiatan pengabdian masyarakat, penelitian ini diposisikan sebagai studi kualitatif deskriptif dengan kontribusi teoretis yang jelas terhadap Psikologi Positif dan Rehabilitasi Psikososial. Tiga partisipan (usia 16–17 tahun) yang dipilih secara purposif mengikuti satu sesi kelompok berdurasi 60 menit yang memadukan refleksi terarah dan peer sharing. Data (catatan lapangan, lembar kerja partisipan, dan refleksi selama sesi) dianalisis menggunakan reflexive thematic analysis. Tiga tema utama muncul: (1) meningkatnya keinginan memberi dampak positif yang disertai tanggung jawab pribadi; (2) pengenalan potensi diri yang terhubung dengan keterampilan dan tujuan jangka panjang; dan (3) kekuatan spiritual sebagai landasan stabil dalam menghadapi kesulitan. Secara empiris, sesi ini memunculkan deskripsi diri yang berlawanan dengan stigma serta afirmasi sejawat yang tampak; perubahan yang diamati meliputi peningkatan kepercayaan diri, kesadaran diri, dan kesiapan untuk reintegrasi sosial. Secara konseptual, temuan menunjukkan bahwa PIC dapat mendukung rekonstruksi diri dengan menyelaraskan kebutuhan otonomi, kompetensi, dan keterhubungan, sekaligus menormalisasi harapan dan pemaknaan dalam konteks budaya yang relevan. Secara praktis, studi ini mendemonstrasikan protokol berbiaya rendah yang dapat direplikasi di lingkungan pemasyarakatan yang terbatas, serta membuka arah evaluasi longitudinal dan multi-situs.

Kata kunci: Positive Interactive Counselling; remaja binaan; citra diri positif; dukungan psikososial; Self-Determination Theory; analisis tematik; stigma sosial; spiritual coping.

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INTRODUCTION

Juvenile incarceration is not only a legal matter; it is a psychosocial challenge in which persistent public stigma and the internalization of negative labels corrode adolescents' self-worth and complicate rehabilitation. Stigma operates on two levels: externally through

stereotyping and social distancing, and internally through self-stigma that diminishes self-esteem, hope, and help-seeking (Corrigan & Watson, 2002; Link & Phelan, 2001). In correctional settings, these forces disrupt school reentry, family ties, and community participation, heightening risks for maladjustment and recidivism (Miller & Therrien, 2018; Thapa et al., 2021). In Indonesia—and across Southeast Asia—where family obligations, community norms, and religious life serve as central identity anchors, stigmatization can be especially consequential for youths' moral self-definition and social reintegration. The present study is grounded in this problem space and builds on formative observations from a brief, reflective group intervention with justice-involved adolescents.

From a developmental perspective, adolescence is a sensitive period for identity construction. Erikson's psychosocial theory positions "identity versus role confusion" as the core task of this stage; when negative labeling saturates the social environment, adolescents may coalesce identities around deviant roles rather than prosocial aspirations (Erikson, 1968/1994; Goffman, 1963). Labeling Theory helps explain how public stigma ("a troubled kid," "a criminal") can become self-defining, eliciting exclusionary responses from institutions and peers that reinforce deviant pathways (Goffman, 1963; Link & Phelan, 2001). These identity dynamics are further shaped by the satisfactions or frustrations of basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—that underwrite intrinsic motivation and adaptive self-regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017). In custodial environments, constrained autonomy, scarce positive feedback, and limited opportunities for mastery make it difficult for adolescents to meet these needs, underscoring the importance of interventions that deliberately cultivate strengths, agency, and supportive bonds.

Contemporary evidence also highlights culturally embedded expressions of stigma and coping among adolescents in Southeast Asia. While cross-national estimates vary, regional studies converge on the finding that social shame and family honor concerns intensify the internalization of labels among justice-involved youth, which can suppress disclosure and help-seeking behaviors (see, e.g., Dolcos et al., 2021; Thapa et al., 2021). Within Islamic cultural contexts common in Indonesia, spirituality and religious practices often function as salient coping resources that support meaning-making, emotion regulation, and perseverance under stress (Dolcos et al., 2021; Schaefer et al., 2008). These cultural affordances suggest that rehabilitation programs which integrate strengths-based reflection, peer affirmation, and spiritually resonant activities may be especially well-suited to the sociocultural realities of Indonesian juvenile facilities.

Positive Interactive Counselling (PIC) is a brief, strengths-focused, alliance-centered approach that intersects three mutually reinforcing theoretical traditions. First, Positive Psychology prioritizes the cultivation of character strengths, optimism, meaning, and hope as direct pathways to well-being (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, 2011; Snyder, 2002). Second, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) specifies how structured opportunities for voice and choice (autonomy), scaffolded skill practice and recognition (competence), and empathic connection and peer affirmation (relatedness) can energize internal motivation and identity growth (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Third, the therapeutic alliance literature shows that goal consensus, collaboration, and a supportive bond robustly predict outcomes for adolescents in care, including those involved with the

justice system (Flückiger et al., 2018; Papalia et al., 2022). Framed through these lenses, PIC can be conceptualized as a structured series of reflective and interactive tasks that counteract internalized stigma, elicit positive self-descriptions, and anchor adolescents in agentic, socially oriented identities.

Despite the conceptual fit, there remains a notable research gap: empirical examinations of PIC with justice-involved adolescents are scarce, and virtually absent in Indonesia's juvenile correctional settings. Regional programming has historically emphasized problem reduction (e.g., anger control, substance avoidance) rather than strength cultivation and identity reconstruction, leaving unanswered questions about how brief, group-based reflective interventions can shift self-concepts and social expectations (Clair-Michaud et al., 2016; Papalia et al., 2022). Moreover, few studies qualitatively trace the process mechanisms through which alliance, peer affirmation, and culturally resonant practices (e.g., reflective exercises that welcome religious language and values) coalesce to generate change in custodial contexts (Dolcos et al., 2021; Schaefer et al., 2008). Addressing this gap is timely given the policy urgency around reintegration and the potential of short, low-cost sessions to complement vocational and educational programming in Lembaga Pembinaan Khusus Anak (LPKA) facilities.

In this study, we examine a single-session PIC activity designed to elicit strengths and aspirations, make self-reflection socially visible, and normalize peer affirmation in a safe, structured format. The session asked adolescents to identify three positive attributes and to share these with peers, thereby transforming private self-evaluations into public, relational recognition. Theoretically, we anticipated that this simple sequence would satisfy SDT needs—offering choice and voice (autonomy), scaffolding mastery experiences (competence), and fostering warm peer acknowledgment (relatedness)—and would catalyze hope pathways (Snyder, 2002) while interrupting negative labels through counter-stereotypic self-descriptions (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Seligman, 2011). Culturally, we expected that spiritually framed reflections, when spontaneously introduced by participants, would function as meaning-making resources that buttress resilience and moral identity (Dolcos et al., 2021; Schaefer et al., 2008).

The present work thus advances three strands of contribution. Conceptually, it integrates Labeling Theory, SDT, and Positive Psychology to explicate how PIC may disrupt internalized stigma and scaffold agentic identity reconstruction among justice-involved adolescents. Empirically, it offers a qualitative thematic analysis of adolescents' own words and behaviors in response to PIC, illuminating how desires for social responsibility, recognition of personal strengths and long-term goals, and spiritual coping emerge as coherent themes (Flückiger et al., 2018; Papalia et al., 2022; Thapa et al., 2021). Practically, it demonstrates a brief, low-resource protocol that can coexist with security constraints and that may enhance readiness for school, family, and community reintegration—an outcome consistently tied to reduced recidivism (Miller & Therrien, 2018).

At the same time, we recognize limitations that motivate clear and measurable objectives. A single, short session with a small group cannot adjudicate causal claims; rather, it can surface plausible mechanisms and feasible practices to inform future trials. Accordingly, the study pursues three objectives: (1) to identify salient themes in adolescents' self-perceptions immediately following PIC; (2) to examine how these themes map onto autonomy,

competence, relatedness, hope, and meaning, thereby testing an SDT-Positive Psychology account of change; and (3) to articulate practice-relevant implications for rehabilitative programming in Indonesian juvenile correctional institutions, including culturally resonant adaptations. By explicitly focusing on internalized stigma and identity processes—rather than only on behavior control—we respond to calls for developmentally and culturally informed models of rehabilitation for justice-involved youth in Southeast Asia (Papalia et al., 2022; Thapa et al., 2021).

In sum, this introduction reframes juvenile rehabilitation as identity work situated at the intersection of stigma, motivation, and culture. PIC is advanced as a theoretically coherent, context-sensitive approach that uses micro-interactions—brief reflective writing, guided sharing, and peer affirmation—to satisfy basic psychological needs, mobilize hope, and re-author self-definitions. The novelty lies in applying and unpacking this approach within an Indonesian juvenile facility, tracing process indicators of change, and proposing a scalable adjunct to institutional programming that aligns with local values and security realities. The following sections detail the methodology, present the thematic findings, and discuss implications for research, practice, and policy. The program “*Cermin Diri: Discovering the Good in Myself*” was implemented as a form of community service aimed at exploring the potential of Positive Interactive Counselling (PIC) in fostering a positive self-image among juvenile inmates in correctional facilities. The program also evaluated its impact on enhancing emotional and psychological well-being, particularly because the approach emphasizes the achievement of personal potential, which aligns with the developmental needs of adolescents in detention.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a descriptive-exploratory qualitative design informed by phenomenological sensibilities to illuminate adolescents’ lived meanings of self-image and the change mechanisms activated during a brief Positive Interactive Counselling (PIC) session. While a fully phenomenological approach (e.g., IPA) was initially considered, it was not adopted due to the single-session, group-based format and institutional constraints typical of custodial settings; instead, we privilege first-person accounts within an exploratory frame that still permits analytic linkage to established theory—namely Self-Determination Theory (needs for autonomy, competence, relatedness) and Positive Psychology (strengths, hope, and meaning). This alignment is well suited to justice-involved adolescents, for whom depth of experience, psychological safety, and feasibility are paramount. The intervention was delivered in one 60-minute session and operationalized PIC through guided reflection and peer sharing, complemented by low-risk, engaging activities—small-group discussion, self-expression through drawing, and brief relaxation exercises—to cultivate a supportive alliance and a safe space amid the constraints and pressures of correctional life (Evans-Chase, 2013; Murphy et al., 2013; Seligman, 2019). Collectively, these design choices seek to elicit positive self-descriptions, make strengths socially visible, and foster prosocial bonds, while producing analyzable qualitative

materials that can be mapped onto SDT and Positive Psychology processes.

Participant Characteristics

This activity targeted three juvenile inmates in the juvenile correctional facility, aged 16 to 17 years. This age range was selected because it represents a critical phase in the development of identity and social skills. At this stage, adolescents often face significant challenges in managing emotions, developing self-understanding, and building healthy social relationships. Within correctional facilities, these challenges are further complicated by a restricted environment, feelings of isolation, and a lack of social support, making it difficult for adolescents to recognize and manage their emotions. Therefore, PIC can assist juveniles in improving their perceptions of themselves and their surrounding world.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a method of intentionally choosing individuals based on specific criteria relevant to the goals of the activity. The criteria included: (1) willingness to participate in the activity, (2) currently undergoing rehabilitation at the Juvenile Correctional Facility, (3) being under 18 years of age, and (4) being in good physical and mental health. A small N ($n = 3$) is methodologically justified for this exploratory, mechanism-seeking inquiry: it enables immersive observation, fine-grained capture of interactional cues (verbal and nonverbal), and member-level triangulation within a single session, while minimizing disruption to facility schedules. The target was depth over breadth, consistent with qualitative aims.

Data Collection Procedure

The equipment used included sheets of paper featuring blank head silhouettes as a medium for exploring positive self-image, as well as writing tools in the form of ballpoint pens. These tools were chosen considering the restrictions on items allowed within the juvenile correctional facility. Ballpoint pens were provided only during the activity and returned to the facilitator afterward to ensure safety. Psychologically, the simplicity of these tools also made them easy to understand and use for adolescents with diverse educational backgrounds.

This activity employed the principles of Strength-Based Therapy, which focuses on uncovering individual strengths and positive potential. The session began with a brief introduction from the facilitator, emphasizing that everyone has good qualities regardless of past mistakes. Participants were then asked to write at least three positive aspects about themselves within the blank head silhouette, which could include attitudes, skills, or experiences. For example, if a participant appeared hesitant and did not write anything for several minutes, the facilitator provided a prompting question such as, “What positive comments have you received from others?” The adolescent might respond, “I like helping my friends.” Such responses indicate a process of self-reflection and self-recognition through a positive and safe approach. If time permitted, participants were given the opportunity to share the contents of their drawings and provide appreciation for one another, aiming to strengthen social recognition and encourage changes in self-perception through peer affirmation.

Data were collected through participatory observation, field documentation, and recording verbal responses from adolescents during discussion and reflection sessions. A second facilitator, who did not directly lead the activities, acted as an independent observer, noting participants’

verbal and non-verbal expressions, including facial expressions, body movements, and interactions among adolescents. To ensure data validity, a role triangulation strategy was employed, dividing roles between the main facilitator and the observing facilitator. Data were recorded in real-time during the session and discussed afterward to align interpretations and avoid bias.

Data Analysis

We employed reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) familiarization (iterative reading of notes and artifacts), (2) initial coding at the semantic level (in vivo when possible), (3) theme generation by clustering related codes, (4) theme review against the dataset, (5) theme definition/naming, and (6) analytic write-up linking themes to theory. Coding proceeded inductively to honor participants' language and situated meanings; a secondary deductive mapping then examined alignment with hypothesized processes from SDT and Positive Psychology (autonomy, competence, relatedness, hope/meaning). Conflicting interpretations were resolved through peer debriefing between facilitator and observer, with decision trails documented.

Rigor and Trustworthiness

We enhanced credibility and dependability through multiple strategies: role triangulation (facilitator vs. observer functions), audit trail (versioned codebooks; memoed analytic decisions), peer debriefing (post-session interpretive checks), and thick description (contextual cues around quotes and behaviors). A brief member-reflection at closing (participants' takeaways) served as light member checking of emergent meanings without pressuring agreement. We monitored reflexivity via structured researcher memos to surface assumptions about stigma, spirituality, and "readiness for change," and to bracket them during coding.

Researcher Positionality

Facilitators were trained in strengths-based and trauma-informed practice and entered the setting as external collaborators. We acknowledge that educator/psychology backgrounds and pro-rehabilitation commitments could predispose interpretation toward growth-oriented readings; maintaining observer independence, memoing, and peer debriefs were used to temper expectancy effects.

RESULTS OF STUDY

This study aims to provide an in-depth overview of the implementation of a community service program conducted in a juvenile correctional facility, including an examination of adolescents' responses and levels of participation during the activity. Furthermore, the study seeks to reflect on the effectiveness of Positive Interactive Counselling (PIC) in providing psychosocial support to juveniles in detention. The program is expected to contribute to enhancing the emotional and social well-being of juvenile inmates, as well as supporting the rehabilitation process through a more humane approach that emphasizes strengthening individual positive potential. By doing so, the program aims to foster self-confidence, hope for the future, and facilitate

the transformation of negative self-perceptions into more positive self-concepts.

Tables and Figures

The participants involved in this study consisted of three male adolescents aged between 12 and 17 years, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant Profile

Participant	Age
RI	16
RO	16
GG	17

During the preparation stage, Positive Interactive Counselling (PIC) was applied in planning the activity flow and developing intervention materials based on activities that incorporated a positive approach toward adolescents' self-perception. The facilitator prepared tools and media, such as sheets of paper featuring blank head silhouettes, used to stimulate adolescents in exploring positive aspects of themselves. Considering the facility limitations in the correctional center, the tools employed were simple yet effective in encouraging adolescents to recognize their personal potential. At this stage, PIC involved planning to ensure that each participant felt supported and had space to speak and reflect on their strengths.

The PIC approach was also implemented in icebreaker activities designed to foster closeness and reduce awkwardness among participants. In these activities, the facilitator used a paper ball as a tool for introductions, facilitating initial interaction among participants. The facilitator focused on creating a positive and inclusive atmosphere, inviting adolescents to talk about themselves in a lighthearted and enjoyable manner. The goal of PIC at this stage was to establish a safe environment and foster a sense of group engagement, enabling adolescents to feel more comfortable opening up during the session.

During the core session, PIC was implemented as the facilitator guided participants to write three positive aspects about themselves within the blank head silhouette drawings. PIC enabled the facilitator to provide space for adolescents to explore and recognize their personal strengths, even in high-pressure situations. The facilitator offered examples and prompting questions to assist participants who might experience difficulty, such as, "*What is something you can do, or often do, better than others?*" or "*What positive comments have you received from others?*" By asking these questions, the facilitator encouraged adolescents to think positively about themselves and to recognize strengths they may not have previously acknowledged. This approach aligns with the principles of PIC, which emphasize reinforcing positive strengths within participants and helping improve their self-perception.

After participants wrote down their positive attributes, the facilitator offered an opportunity for them to share with the group. PIC was applied here to strengthen mutual respect and support among participants. The facilitator guided the sharing session, allowing participants to provide appreciation for the positive qualities they observed in each other. This process reinforced the positive self-image that had been built and strengthened adolescents' belief in their potential for growth and change. In this context, PIC

encouraged participants to support one another in an environment of respect and without fear of expressing their positive qualities.

The analysis of field notes, participant worksheets, and in-session reflections yielded three data-driven themes: (1) a growing desire to make a positive impact coupled with personal responsibility, (2) recognition of self-potential

linked to skills and long-term goals, and (3) spiritual strength as a stabilizing foundation in adversity. These themes were derived inductively from participants' words and behaviors during a single Positive Interactive Counselling (PIC) session in a juvenile correctional facility (LPKA).

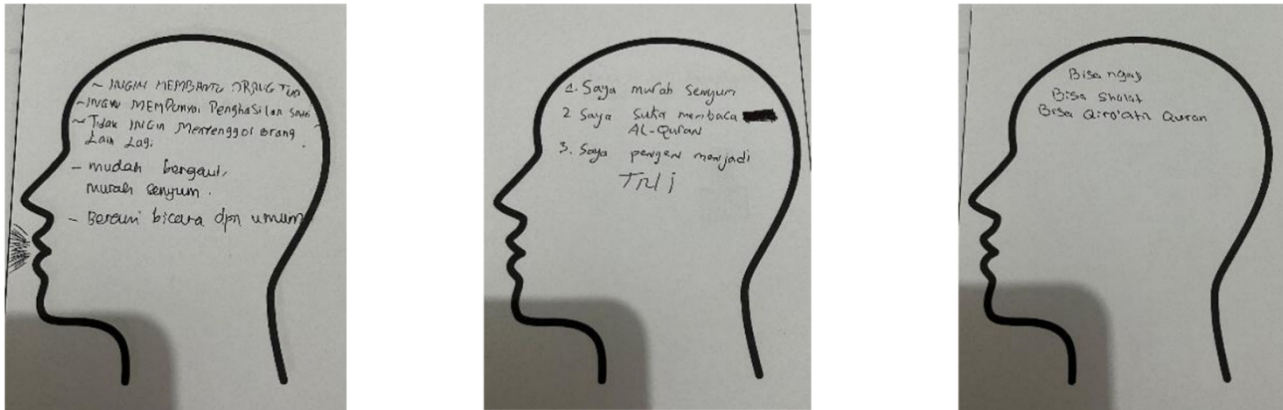


Figure 1. Results of Participant Worksheets: RO, RI, and GG

Theme 1: Desire to Make a Positive Impact and Personal Responsibility

Participants articulated aspirations that centered on repairing relationships and contributing meaningfully to others. For instance, RO stated, *"I want to help my parents, to earn my own income, not to disturb others anymore, to be sociable and friendly, and to be confident speaking in public."* This verbatim illustrates a shift from a problem-focused self-view to a prosocial, responsibility-oriented stance. Observationally, as peers affirmed RO's statement, he displayed more open posture and increased eye contact, suggesting rising confidence and social approach motivation.

From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), autonomy, competence, and relatedness are basic psychological needs that underlie intrinsic motivation. In this context, RO's wishes to attain financial autonomy, to feel competent in self-management and social interaction, and to cultivate respectful, positive relationships illustrate efforts to satisfy these needs, which are central to personal and social development. RO's desire to generate a positive impact on his parents and the broader community also reflects an attempt to fulfill relatedness needs, which can reduce social isolation and enhance psychological well-being.

Furthermore, RO's aspiration to exert a positive influence on his surroundings indicates growth in self-confidence. This suggests that RO has begun to perceive himself as capable of controlling and directing his life toward more adaptive outcomes. In this context, modern self-efficacy theory as articulated by Schunk & DiBenedetto (2020a, 2020b) posits that individuals' beliefs in their ability to overcome challenges and attain goals play a pivotal role in shaping motivation and behavioral planning. This process is crucial for reconstructing a positive self-identity, enabling individuals to respond adaptively to their environment and improve the quality of their social relationships.

RO's stated desire to refrain from disturbing others and to socialize more effectively reflects positive development in empathy and social skills. In social psychology, the cultivation of empathy is central to reducing antisocial tendencies and enhancing the capacity to form healthy relationships. Van Noorden et al. (2015) found that empathy is significantly associated with engagement in prosocial behavior and the avoidance of aggressive dynamics, particularly among adolescents. In this context, the strength-based orientation within PIC provides a space that encourages RO to recognize and reinforce his positive potentials while shifting cognitions previously shaped by negative social labels toward a more constructive and positive self-perception. This serves as a foundation for rebuilding self-confidence, achieving autonomy, improving social relationships, and contributing positively upon reentry into the community.

Theme 2: Self-Potential Related to Skills and Long-Term Goals

Participants identified strengths and sketched future pathways. RI wrote, *"I am cheerful and friendly, I am proficient in reading the Qur'an, and I want to become a soldier."* This statement links present attributes (sociability, religious literacy) to a challenging long-term goal (military service), signaling future-oriented thinking. In group sharing, peers acknowledged RI's discipline and calm demeanor; the facilitator recorded that this recognition appeared to consolidate RI's resolve to plan concrete next steps (e.g., fitness routines, time-management).

RI's aspiration to become a soldier also reflects his belief in his capacity to overcome challenges and achieve his goals. This is evident in his ability to adapt, manage difficulties, and leverage personal strengths such as Qur'anic literacy and a sociable demeanor. Consistent with Schunk & DiBenedetto (2020a, 2020b), individuals' beliefs in their ability to successfully complete specific tasks play a key role in shaping motivation, perseverance, and success in personal development. In this context, RI demonstrates the

potential to cultivate critical skills required in the military profession such as discipline and resilience even within the constrained conditions of a correctional facility.

RI's motivation to pursue his aspirations and actively develop the skills and positive character traits that support those goals is also consistent with Ryan & Deci (2017), who emphasize that fulfilling the needs for competence and autonomy in pursuing long-term goals can strengthen intrinsic motivation and a sense of personal control. In this context, the intervention helped RI to uncover and reinforce his existing potential as part of a process of forming a more structured and empowered life direction.

The changes experienced by RI became evident when he began to consciously and positively chart his life course. Rather than passively undergoing rehabilitation, RI started to envision himself as an individual with aspirations, self-control, and a future worth striving for. This shift signifies a transformation in self-perception from someone previously constrained by the identity of a detainee to a person with vision and the confidence to grow.

The application of Strength-Based Therapy is highly relevant here, as this approach highlights the importance of identifying and strengthening individual assets to achieve long-term goals. By focusing on existing potentials such as Qur'anic literacy and the ability to interact well with others RI was guided to develop these competencies and dispositions so they can be applied to attaining his life goals. This approach aligns with the tenets of positive psychology, which prioritize the cultivation of individual strengths rather than deficits, enabling RI to build the self-confidence and skills necessary for realizing his aspirations and future success (Seligman, 2011).

Theme 3: Spiritual Strength as a Foundation for Overcoming Adversity

Spiritual practices emerged as salient personal resources. GG reflected, "*I can recite the Qur'an (ngaji), I am diligent in performing prayers, and I am proficient in qir'at al-Qur'an.*" His worksheet and comments emphasized worship as a source of calm and meaning. During reflection, GG described prayer as "keeping my heart steady," which the observer coded as spiritual coping, accompanied by visibly relaxed affect.

Recent psychological research suggests that spiritual resources can play a vital role in coping with life stressors. Individuals who employ spirituality as a coping mechanism tend to report higher levels of psychological well-being. In this regard, spirituality operates as a tool for building emotional resilience, enabling individuals to manage stress and situational pressures. As noted by Ano & Vasconcelles (2005), positive religious coping contributes to healthier emotion regulation and the formation of adaptive life meaning. For GG, the practice of worship and deep engagement with the Qur'an provides an inner stability that helps him remain steadfast amid the pressures of the correctional environment.

During the reflection session, GG was asked to write down his positive qualities, and one salient aspect was his skill in qira'at al-Qur'an. This indicates that spirituality functions not only as a source of calm in times of crisis but also as a valued component of self-identity that can serve as a foundation for the future. This process marks a shift in the meaning of spirituality for GG from a mere religious routine to an inner strength that provides direction and hope. As shown by Schaefer et al. (2008), spirituality can bolster positive adaptation in contexts of trauma and isolation. In this regard, spirituality for GG operates not simply as a

passive bulwark but as an active source of strength that reinforces his sense of self and life direction. GG has begun to view himself not as a "troubled youth," but as an individual with moral and spiritual foundations on which to rebuild.

By relying on this spiritual strength, GG is developing the emotional resilience necessary to face future challenges. Recent research also suggests that internalized spiritual practice can enhance self-efficacy and improve overall psychological well-being (Charzyńska et al., 2021; Dolcos et al., 2021). At this point, there is evidence of a shift in how GG perceives himself from someone previously dependent on the correctional system to a person who trusts in the inner values he holds as guiding principles. During the reflection and closing phase, the facilitator posed reflective questions to elicit participants' thoughts and feelings after the session. Questions such as, "*Of all today's activities, which part was most meaningful to you?*" and "*What is one thing you learned about yourself today?*" were used to help participants contemplate the process they had undergone.

Cross-case comparison.

RO's narrative emphasized social repair and interpersonal responsibility, RI's emphasized goal direction and skill-based potential, while GG foregrounded spiritual grounding and emotional regulation. Despite these differences, all three cases evidenced self-reconstruction—a movement from stigmatized labels toward more agentic identities—through three common processes visible in the session: (a) self-reflection that elicited positive self-descriptors, (b) peer affirmation that publicly validated those descriptors, and (c) value-anchoring (often spiritual) that stabilized emerging self-views. Contextually, these shifts unfolded within the LPKA environment, where time, materials, and autonomy are constrained; the brevity and low-risk nature of PIC activities (writing, sharing, brief relaxation) were pivotal in creating a safe, structured space for self-expression.

Policy and practice implications.

Findings support a tiered model: (1) Strategic HRD-style programming inside LPKA that integrates PIC with skills training (e.g., goal-setting, communication), (2) Managerial practices that formalize peer affirmation and feedback rituals to sustain relatedness and competence cues, and (3) Policy measures that resource short, repeatable PIC cycles as an adjunct to educational/vocational tracks and link them to post-release transitions (family conferencing, school re-entry). Embedding culturally sensitive spiritual reflection as an optional element respects diversity while leveraging a widely held coping resource in Indonesia (Dolcos et al., 2021).

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS.

The single-session, small-N design limits causal inference. Future research should use longitudinal, mixed-methods designs and compare PIC with other brief interventions (e.g., motivational interviewing) to test durability and breadth of effects (Clair-Michaud et al., 2016). Multi-site studies across Indonesian provinces could examine contextual moderators (facility climate, chaplaincy resources) and outcomes such as school re-engagement and recidivism.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The implementation of the Positive Interactive Counselling (PIC) approach showed significant results in fostering a safe and supportive space for adolescents in juvenile correctional facilities to explore their strengths and potential. Through self-reflective activities such as writing personal attributes and sharing life stories participants began to shift from being labeled as “troubled youth” to seeing themselves as individuals with capacities for growth. Examples include Participant RO’s aspiration to achieve independence for the sake of his family, Participant RI’s ambition to become a soldier, and Participant GG’s reliance on spiritual strength to cope with stress and build resilience. These outcomes highlight that, despite the constraints of correctional settings, adolescents hold substantial potential for change.

The program also carries long-term benefits for social reintegration, equipping participants with emotional regulation, empathy, communication, and goal-setting skills crucial for reducing reoffending and leading productive lives. To maximize impact, similar initiatives could integrate vocational training, career orientation, and collaboration with families, schools, and communities, ensuring continuous support post-release.

In sum, the PIC approach has proven effective in strengthening adolescents’ psychosocial capacities, preparing them for societal reintegration, and contributing meaningfully to the rehabilitation process by harnessing their positive potentials as foundations for lasting transformation.

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DECLARATIONS

Ethics approval and consent to participate

The present study adhered to established ethical guidelines for qualitative research. Prior to the data collection process, verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants. As the research did not involve vulnerable groups or clinical interventions, formal ethical clearance was deemed unnecessary according to institutional policy.

Consent for publication

All participants granted verbal consent for the inclusion of their anonymized statements and narratives in this publication.

Availability of data and materials

The datasets produced and examined in this study are not publicly accessible due to confidentiality agreements with participants. Nevertheless, the data can be obtained from the corresponding author upon a reasonable request.

Conflicts of interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial or non-financial interests that could have influenced the outcomes of this study.

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Authors' contributions

Merinta Wira Ababiel, as the first author, made substantial contributions to all stages of the research. She conceptualized the study, developed the research instruments, and was directly involved in conducting fieldwork and interviews. She carried out the thematic data analysis, organized the findings into coherent themes, and prepared the initial draft of the manuscript, including drawing the conclusions.

Jefri Setyawan, as the second author, contributed primarily in the later stages of the research process. He reviewed the overall manuscript critically for intellectual content, provided guidance in refining the arguments, and ensured the coherence of the literature integration. His contributions strengthened the scholarly quality of the final paper.

Mary Philia Elisabeth, as the third author, supported the refinement of the manuscript through substantive feedback and revisions. She contributed to improving the clarity, accuracy, and ensuring the manuscript’s readiness for publication.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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